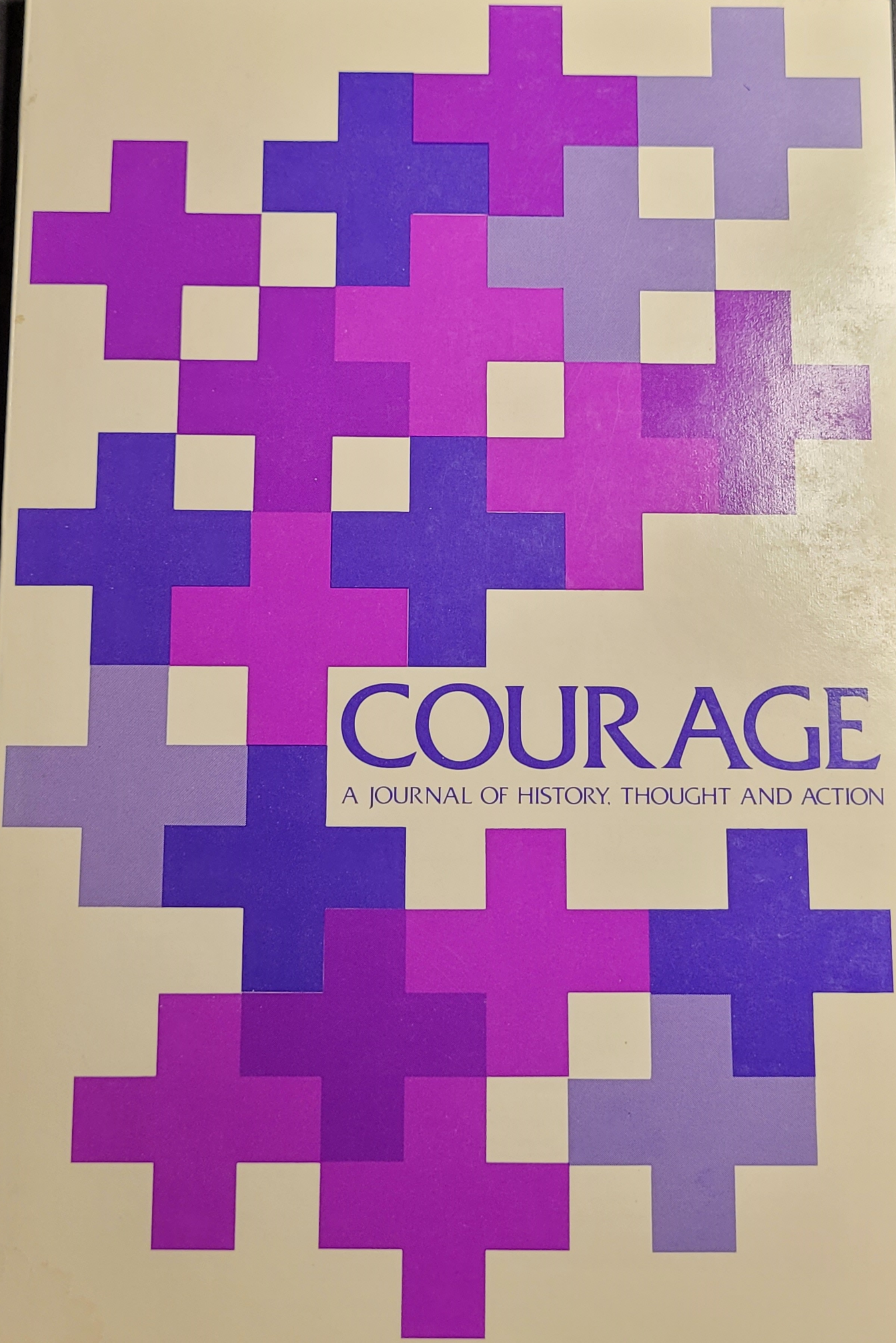

COURAGE

A JOURNAL OF HISTORY, THOUGHT AND ACTION

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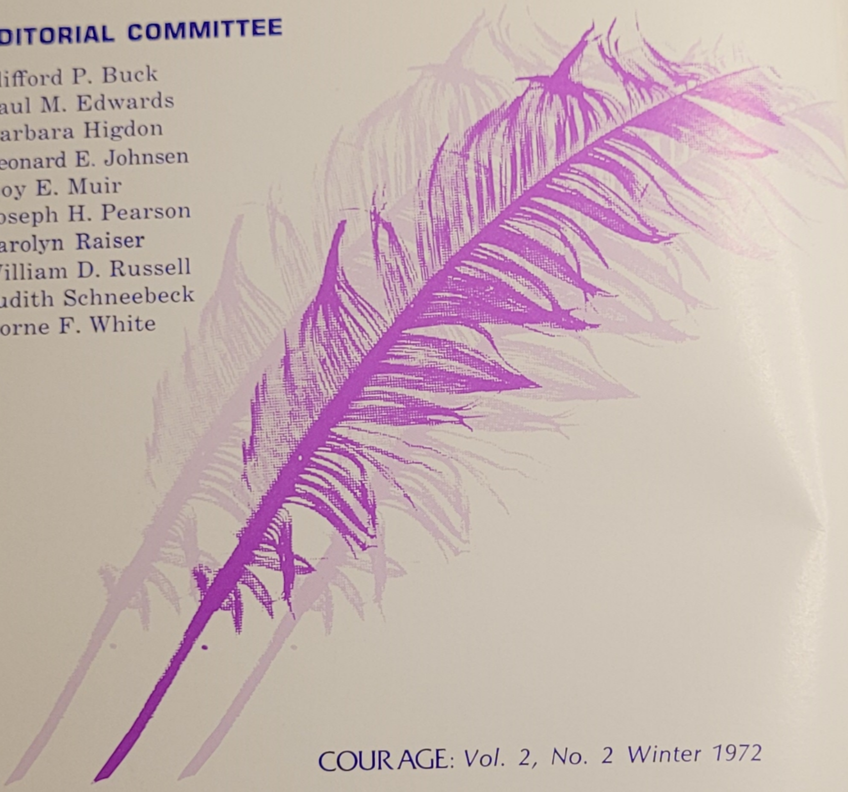

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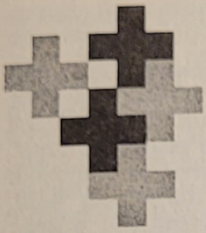
COURAGE

A JOURNAL OF HISTORY, THOUGHT AND ACTION

POWER OF REVELATION



A Reappraisal of Canonization in the Doctrine and Covenants

Kathryn Olson

Because of faulty canonization procedures, an unjustified power structure, and our predominantly nonanalytical membership, we have severely limited our potential for grasping new truths.

The Reorganized Latter Day Saint Church bases much of its claim to divine authority on its belief that God is unchanging; hence, he will relate to people today in the same way as he has in the past. As the "restored" church it seeks to bring back and maintain all the practices of the early Christian church. These principles logically, but quite innovatively, extend to an open canon of scripture. F. Henry Edwards summarizes it well:

> The church believes that in this dispensation of the fullness of time God purposes to reveal his mind and will to all his people in the measure of their need and their willingness to abide the conditions of Revelation. The church believes, further, that it is the purpose of God to speak to the church as a body, clarifying past revelations, interpreting his will in the new situations of our modern world, and setting elevated standards of spiritual life and action. In divine guidance already received by the body, our Father has said that he will reveal himself through the prophet-leader of the church, called and ordained of him and supported by the faith and prayers and vote of the people, and that no one is to assume the prophetic function in the church and for the church except this prophetic leader.[1]

The purpose and scope of the anthology of latter-day revelations envisioned by early church leaders and resulting finally in the *Doctrine and Covenants* was certainly unlike other Restoration scriptural resources. Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and F. G. Williams, editorial board of the Kirtland Edition of 1835, explained its purpose in the preface:

> The church viewing this subject to be of importance, appointed, through their servants and delegates the High Council, your servants to select and compile this work. Several reasons might be adduced in favor of this move of the Council, but we only add a few words. They knew that the church was evil spoken of in many places—its faith and belief misrepresented, and the way of truth subverted. By some it was represented as disbelieving the bible, by others as being an enemy to

> all good order and uprightness, and by others as being injurious to the peace of all governments civil and political.[2]

Containing only the counsel of God as perceived through the founder of the church in the form of revelations, the book compiled dealt with very specific problems of the early Saints' world. Over half the sections were addressed to individuals and had no general interest. The book seems lacking in variety and human interest as compared with the Old Testament. The Hebrew Bible is filled with legal, historical, biographical, fictional, and prophetic narratives, poems, and sermons, forming the cream of Hebrew literature. The New Testament and even the somewhat dry and less varied *Book of Mormon* have more to offer in terms of historical narration, pastoral letters, sermons, developments of theology, and prophetic writings.

The canonization of biblical scriptures was a very involved and lengthy process. The Old and New Testament canons were agreed upon only after many centuries of preservation, use, and selection, gradually arriving at the collection of works which seemed to carry the weight of divine authority.

Many Christians and even some RLDS members question the validity of the *Doctrine and Covenants* since the revelations it contains have not been time tested in the manner of the biblical writings. However, W. Wallace Smith, in a sermon to an Independence congregation in 1920, defended the worth of the *Doctrine and Covenants:*

> Yet we are very fond of quoting the New Testament, though in the day and age in which it was written, or being revealed, it was even a question among disciples as to how far and how much of it ought to be accepted. . . . We have the same inclination, and I suppose we cannot help it, to pay too little attention to that which God is revealing, even though we pay a great deal of attention to and reverently respect that which he has given.[3]

One of the major criteria for canon consideration in the New Testament was apostolic authorship. Recent biblical scholarship has pointed out that very few of the books we treasure as the New Testament were written by apostles, making us reevaluate "proper authority" as our standards for canonization. Our modern Scriptures are also obsessed with authorship, limiting ours even more severely than the New Testament, which recognized several authors (the apostles) writing at the same time.

W. Wallace Smith commented in 1920 that it is "Quite a dangerous thing to do to lay down a precedent that this church was to be guided, governed or directed by the revelation of any one man or any group of men or any class of men."[4] This danger is safeguarded, he hastened to add, by the principle of common consent. Though the church membership generally stresses prophetic leadership, it still, in theory, reserves the right to exercise agency and reject purported revelation.

Common consent was not always exercised in the church, however; for in the early days Joseph Smith's revelations were accepted strictly on his charismatic authority. The *Book of Com-*

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mandments, which the church attempted to publish as an official document in 1833, was drawn up principally by Oliver Cowdery, John Whitmer, W. W. Phelps, and Joseph Smith. It wasn't until the 1833 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* was to be published that the general assembly was even asked to approve the collection as a whole. In the Reorganized Church it has become customary for revelations to be submitted first to the quorums and then to the delegates, who usually in one day, under emotional pressure, railroad through the inspirational documents as the Word of God and provide for their canonization. This has been most often accomplished even before the document has been printed for the delegates to read.

With minor exceptions, revelations are recognized officially only if they originate from the prophet, seer, and revelator of the church. This centralization of theocratic authority similar to that of the papacy is declaimed by those outside the church and some within. It is defended by Dr. Roy Cheville:

> We believe in implemented revelation, through chosen vessels whose preparation, insight, and spiritual discernment make them more capable of apprehending God's will. And only the prophet who thus implements God's will is authorized to receive revelation for the church.[5]

Though readily accepted now, this concept of exclusive and direct spiritual "hot line" continuously caused contention in the early Latter Day Saint Church until Joseph Smith, Jr., delivered several revelations attesting to its appropriateness. Born out of a mystical experience, the church in its early days was characterized by an incidence of healings, angelic visitations, and other spiritual manifestations among its members. Joseph Smith at first excluded even himself from the power to prophesy and claimed only the ability to translate the plates as is revealed in Chapter IV, verse 2, of the *Book of Commandments*, dated March 1829, " . . . And he has a gift to translate the book, and I have commanded him that he shall pretend to no other gift, for I will grant him no other gift." Apparently Joseph received further light on the interpretation of this heavenly message, for in the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants* this revelation was altered by him to read:

> And you have a gift to translate the plates; and this is the first gift that I bestowed upon you, and I have commanded that you should pretend to no other gift until my purpose is fulfilled in this; for I will grant unto you no other gift until it is finished.[6]

Soon Joseph had to contend with a growing number of oracular artists, one of whom was his brother, Sam. Oliver Cowdery, who had helped translate the *Book of Mormon*, began to have prophetic aspirations himself until Joseph sought to convince him that he should be satisfied with his own talent with the divining rod. In the same revelation (presently Section 27 in the RLDS edition) Smith informed Cowdery that "no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jr. . . . and thou shalt be obedient unto the things which I shall give unto him." Then Joseph sent Oliver off to preach to the Lamanites, which cut him off from any possible centralized following or prophetic popularity. He denounced further in the revelation the writings which Hiram Page derived from his seer stone, going so far as to label them "Satanic." Thus began the belief that one, and only one, prophet was desirable so that the Saints would not be led astray by foretold false prophets. William McLellin, who was critical of the inspired messages of Joseph Smith and felt he could surpass Smith's in quality, was severely reprimanded in what is now RLDS Section 66. Perhaps to dissolve the following he was gaining, McLellin was ordered (through Smith) to leave Ohio and not to go to Zion, but instead "unto the eastern lands."

Within a few months, following Smith's footsteps, young Issac Russell produced some troublesome revelations, prompting God to reemphasize in Section 43:3-4 that commandments and revelations come only through the appointed prophet. This revelation further strengthened the powers of the president by announcing his right to choose the successor even if his spiritual gifts were taken from him.

Dissent mounted as other influential Mormons challenged Smith's autocracy and murmurings of impeachment gained support. David Whitmer felt that God never intended the revelations to be published since they were mostly personal and not of general value. He also objected that while most of Joseph's "true prophecies" were published, "those of the brethren were not."[7] Two months later, in November 1831, Joseph softened and, in fact, contradicted his previous stand in an inspired message to Mr. McLellin stating "unto all those who were ordained unto this priesthood" (elders) that "whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be Scripture."[8]

By 1843 James C. Brewster was enabled to translate writings from Hebraic antiquity, purported to be the lost books of Ezra. He presented them to Joseph Smith for further direction. Joseph exercised his "pocket veto" by receiving no light on the validity of the works. Finally Brewster published them himself.

Brigham Young had a far less restrictive view towards revelatory authority. In a speech at the first business meeting after the death of Joseph and Hyrum he said,

> The question arises with some who has the right to revelation? I will not ascend any higher than a priest and ask the priest what is your right? You have the right to receive the administration of angels. If an angel was to come to you and tell you what the Lord was going to do in this day, you would say you had a revelation. The president of the priests have a right to the Urim and Thummim which gives all revelation. He has the right of receiving visits from angels. Every priest then in the church has the right of receiving visits from angels. Every member has the right of receiving revelation for themselves, both male and female.[9]

The Utah church still accepts multiple authority, designating every member of the Presidency and Twelve, as well as the Presiding Patriarch, a "prophet, seer, and revelator" for the church. Because the Mormon church has not expanded its *Doctrine and Covenants* canon according to this more open belief, many Reorganized Latter

Day Saints mistakenly assume that Mormons make no claims of modern revelation.

Seeing no indication that inspiration received by others than the president would be canonized or perhaps even preserved, Alvin Knisley in 1913 published a compilation of divine guidances given to other priesthood members since the beginning of the Restoration in his book, *Revelations in Our Times.* He also included early revelations of Joseph Smith not before or now canonized. Realizing the suspicion and distrust many Saints would have for his endeavor, he hastened to assure them in the foreword that he was not claiming that the revelations were authoritative. He very wisely left the evaluation of truth to the reader:

> Perchance the brother-reader may question the propriety of such a publication, I respectfully offer him the following explanation. From the rise of the Latter-day work to the presnt [sic] time our people have published both in periodicals and books, now and then, here and there, more or less of just such matter as forms our exclusive compilation. The only change, then, is one from the retail to the wholesale—a very natural development.
>
> Whether from God or not, the revelations that follow do not go forth as a law to obligate the body. God settled that business early as 1831 in section 43, of Doctrine and Covenants. Herein are contained some revelations that were given through Joseph the Seer and some through his successor, but even they do not rank with these in the Doctrine and Covenants because they have not been subjected to the regular process of scrutiny and approval; else they would be in the Doctrine and Covenants.
>
> As to the source of the revelation we leave that between the reader and God. If there is any chaff there is certainly a lot of wheat—scratch it out.[10]

If one can accept the basic assumption that there is a divine resource which communicates with man, then it is my contention that because of faulty canonization procedures, and unjustified power structure, and our predominantly nonanalytical membership, we have severely limited our potential for grasping new truths.

The power of the president is unwarranted and hampering. According to one official who studied General Conference minutes, practically every revelation received came in response to specific prayer by the president. Certainly any human being has many prejudices which would limit his openness to new truths. In light of the attitudes toward women revealed in a *Herald* interview with him, it would seem very unlikely that Wallace Smith, for example, could ever give objective and open consideration to calling women to the priesthood.[11] Secondly, it is a desecration of human potential to rely on one man for all guidance and prophetic leadership, excluding the contributions of others. Thirdly, it encourages almost an attitude of worship of a man who is fallible, who must be kept in check by other reasoning minds. The president's words are too often taken for gospel, dispelling positive dissent. It is too much of a temptation for a person of unchecked power to wield it, however sincerely, in a sometimes coercive manner. Since only the president can pick his successor, that also has established, particularly in the Reorganized Church, an impenetrable dynasty. Finally, the structure we are under seems to be the result of a very human desire to maintain power.

The fault also lies with the membership. They have tended to be naive and unquestioning in their attitude toward those with "authority." They absolve themselves from the responsibility to seek for and reevaluate truth. In some cases they have been too inclusive, unwilling to decanonize sections of the *Doctrine and Covenants* they have long since disavowed. Not until the 1970 Conference was the membership willing to admit that the sections concerning baptism for the dead were not revelatory—but even so they still have a place in an appendix. A reluctancy to admit that a prophet might have been wrong also inhibits members from reevaluating the divinity of specific passages in the *Doctrine and Covenants.* In other cases precedent has made the membership too exclusive. The world church will not officially recognize the revelatory worth of a committee report, resolution, or other message from any other person within or without the church by initiating inclusion of such material in the book. Because consistency with previous scriptures is a standard for canonization, the body is not as open to radical revelation. Their understanding of revelation as a plenary experience also prohibits the changing of a revelation before or after canonization. They fail to recognize the humanness involved in every such message; instead they feel that each document in the *Doctrine and Covenants* has made it because it is somehow perfected by God himself. They ignore the fact that Joseph Smith, Jr., continually revised revelations. Until 1909 they weren't even ready to change spelling errors. Arguments over such literalistic approaches to the *Doctrine and Covenants* caused two of the major leaders of the Reorganization, Zenas Gurley, Jr., and Jason Briggs, to become disassociated with the church.

The other destructive factor is the very procedure used to approve revelations. Under pressure of time and emotion, delegates accept new scripture, usually in a matter of hours, without being able to debate its acceptance or weigh its ramifications over an extended period of time. I believe it is also impossible to make amendments from the floor so the Conference can only approve or disapprove by paragraph.

Probably very few people see the need to change our present system of canonization. Apparently no articles by members have been written criticizing it. Perhaps it is a carry-over from Resolution 222 which states:

> It is clear to us that it is destructive to the church, and inconsistent with the calling and dignity of the ministry, to decry, disclaim, preach, or teach contrary to the revelations in said Book of Covenants, or to arraign them in such a way that the faith of the people of the church is weakened and they thereby distressed.

In 1969 Lorne White of Graceland College prepared a resolution to postpone immediate canonization of revelation for at least two years, allowing some time for the members to become acquainted with the purported revelation. White's resolution was presented to the Lamoni Stake but was defeated. Hopefully such proposals will be brought up again in the future. I have included White's proposal in the footnotes to this article as a possible way to remedy the present inadequacies of our canonization process.[12]

One of the great theologians of our time, Paul Tillich, expresses a persuasive conclusion:

> It is the Spirit which created the canon, and like all things spiritual, the canon can not be fixed in a definite way. The partial openness of the canon is a safeguard of the spirituality of the church.[13]

The Spirit can be equated to truth, but man's perception of it is always open to inquiry. It is still our responsibility as believers, as it is in every church in every period of history, to reappraise professed divine truths.

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1. F. Henry Edwards, *Overviews of Latter Day Saintism* (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1945), pp. 19-20.
2. Preface to the 1835 Kirtland edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants.*
3. Reed M. Holmes, *Upon This Rock* (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1935), p. 12.
4. W. Wallace Smith, "The Book of Doctrine and Covenants," *Saints' Herald,* LXVIII (February 9, 1921), p. 125.
5. *Ibid.*
6. D. and C. 32:1.
7. Joseph Smith III, "Request for Explanations in Regard to the Doctrine and Covenants," *Saints' Herald,* XLIX (January 15, 1902), p. 62.
8. D. and C. 68:1.
9. *Times and Seasons,* Vol. V (October 1844), p. 889.
10. Alvin Knisley, *Revelation in Our Times,* Foreword, p. 3.
11. W. Wallace Smith, "Personally Speaking," *Saints' Herald* (February 1970), p. 43.
12. Whereas, The weight and burden of legislative and regulative action appears to be increasing at an alarming rate in content and complexity during each succeeding World Conference of the Church, and

Whereas, The present procedure associated with the presentation, examination and acceptance (or rejection) of those "documents" from time to time to be submitted to the church as purporting to be the Word of God to the Church, precludes an adequate hearing, analysis and consistency testing, and

Whereas, Whatever action the church takes with respect to such presentation, examination and acceptance (or rejection) of such documents irrevocably commits the church to their provisions forever, and

Whereas, The examination of such documents is usually made under the stress of an understandable emotional strain, and under the constant awareness of insufficient time, and

Whereas, Such hurried action may seriously limit and even jeopardize any adequate and requisite examination, not only of the content but also the implication of such documents, thus frustrating the avowed intent of the whole procedure, and

Whereas, The present procedure was apparently not instituted until early in the days of the Reorganization (with the possible exception of the initial action when the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants was accepted) and then with no apparent attempt or intent to claim the establishment of such procedures as the result of divine decree, and

Whereas, The church, in our judgment is not bound by the present procedure by which the documents conceived as inspirational or revelational in nature, submitted by the president of the church, for general application to the church, are received and acted upon during the week in which they are received, and

Whereas, While through this resolution, we in no way advocate a departure from a faith in the necessity and the power of revelation, nevertheless, we are hopeful that through this suggested modification of our present procedure we might more adequately understand and anticipate the sure Word of God to the Church, and

Whereas, The present procedure is obviously not consistent with the historical process by which the canonization of the Old and New Testament documents took place (which in terms of fact and time extended over many centuries of usage, testing, study and application), therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Lamoni Stake Conference (Fall, 1969) go on record as favoring an amendment to the present accepted and traditional procedure by providing a more extended period during which the documents can be examined, analyzed and compared, and be it further

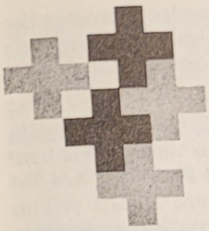
Resolved, That such an extended period of examination be defined and designated as at least the inter-conference period providing such a period is at least of two years duration, following the specific World Conference where such an inspirational document is presented for consideration, and be it further

Resolved, That during the inter-conference period of examination hearings be set up in all stakes, districts and unorganized areas and within the organized quorums of the Church, for the express purpose of providing opportunity for the examination, analysis, testing and comparing of the content and provisions of such documents with that which has already been accepted, thus hopefully providing a more adequate means of determining the validity and the implications of such documents, and be it further

Resolved, That calls for men to specific offices within the general ministries of the Church where the World Church has traditionally involved itself (e.g. calls to Twelve, etc.), if incorporated in such a document of an inspirational nature, be separated from the main body of any or most such documents, for the immediate action the conference may from time to time deem advisable. However, it is conceivable that in many such cases, even such separated portions or provisions may more adequately be subjected to the process of delayed action as provided for in this resolution, and be it further

Resolved, That such action of the Stake Conference, if favorable, together with a copy of the enacted resolution, be submitted to the next World Conference of the Church for action there.

13. Richard Lyon Morgan, "Let's Be Honest About the Canon," *Christian Century*, May 31, 1967. Reprinted in the *Saints' Herald*, September 1, 1967.



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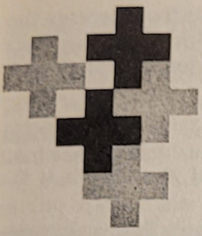

The Spirit and the Forms

Church Life and Order in the First One Hundred Years

Geoffrey Spencer

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the character of the Christian Church during the first century of its life, with particular emphasis upon the organized forms of outward and corporate expression. Because the outward forms were rooted in and emerged out of the inward, experiential life of the community, it will be necessary to discern the nature of that life as it related to the external forms. Since there is a continuing tension between the dynamic character of the ideas which underlie any movement in history and the external forms which concretize those ideas, it will be necessary to observe how the mutual relations between life and order vary in the course of this first century. J. Vernon Bartlet suggests the general descriptive titles "primitive" and "Catholic" to describe the church during this time, and adds that these two stages

> need to be distinguished not only in the really-historical sense, but within these different stages must be discerned as regards the degree to which the emphasis and elements most characteristic of the one tend to prevail over those of the other.[1]

Significant developments occurred in the church during this period. The conditions under which they occurred and the reasons for them are not always clear. The task is rendered more difficult by the fluid character of many of the terms used and by the remoteness, both in time and space, of the original content against which they must be understood. Nevertheless, the study should lead to some appreciation of the relationship of the elements of inner experiential life and external order in the early church and of the interplay between these two elements.

The Primary Self-understanding of the Church

As P. S. Minear observes: "The New Testament idea of the church is not so much a technical doctrine as a gallery of pictures."[2] Perhaps the most striking element common to these pictures is that the church, like the person who is in Christ, was a new creation, the sign that the Messianic age had arrived. Alan Richardson presses the figure of the church as the resurrection-body of Jesus and suggests that the early disciples saw Jesus not as the founder of the church but as himself the church:

> The Church is not a community of like-minded people, but the body of those who have been incorporated into the *persona* of Christ, totus Christus, the head and the members. . . . This is another way of saying that the Church is the resurrection-body of Jesus Christ.[3]

Concerning this figure, J. G. Davies asserts that the very term "body of Christ" is a typically Jewish expression, which invests eschatological nuances in the understanding of the church and that the Hebrew "was not concerned with an object as such but with what it becomes in relation to its final reference according to the divine purpose."[4] Further, although the church was a "new thing," there existed a conscious recognition of its solidarity with Israel. This significant association, in which the church, while a new creation, was at the same time the consummation of God's unbroken working, lurked behind Peter's allusion to the prophecy of Joel regarding the sign of the "last days" (Acts 2:16-17).

Thus the primitive self-understanding of the church caught up and continued the biblical doctrine of the "People of God," whose election was an act of God's sovereign and unconditioned grace. God gathered the community through Christ, who was its head, in the sense that he was the source of life for the whole body and the means by which it derived its continuing existence.

The Holy Spirit empowered the response to the call of God; indeed church "membership" was participation in the Holy Spirit. Davies has pointed out that belief in the church had, therefore, a twofold basis—the Christological and Pneumatological. One emphasized what had been accomplished and provided the unshakable foundation; the other pointed to what was yet to be accomplished and to the dynamic life of the church.

The fact that these two dimensions existed side by side rather than in tension, at least in the earliest experience of the church, points to the marked eschatological character of the community.[5] The apostolic church in the New Testament firmly rooted itself in the conviction that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit had taken place, grasping the outpouring as proof that the Messianic Age had broken in. Thus the church, in the self-understanding of the primitive community, was the new humanity in Christ, whose origins and destiny rested in the powerful initiative of God, heralding the new Creation of the Spirit and the end of the present age.

The Life-style of the Primitive Church

The people of God were constituted, or rather reconstituted, solely by relation to Christ, a basic understanding attested in the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Thus, despite the variety of expressions of the life of the church which shall be referred to, there was a deeply unifying common memory and

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common life. This communion of life, or *koinonia*, did not have its life from the well springs of its own vitality but was the new humanity by virtue of its relation to Christ, a reality often described prepositionally so that the members all were in Christ. This theme appeared at least to represent the earliest self-consciousness of the community.

As has been suggested, the community understood itself as living in the age of the outpouring of the Spirit; and its life was shaped to give adequate scope and liberty of exercise to the Spirit dwelling in all its members. It would appear that whatever "order" may be said to have been operating at this stage was such as to facilitate the working of the Spirit and existed as "regulative" rather than "constitutive," a distinction which will receive further attention in the course of this paper. The Spirit, present and active in and through the community of believers, was the "ordering" agency, indicating where various persons should go (as in the case of Paul and Peter), bringing unity, and teaching what was necessary (John 14:26). The life of the church was therefore a response, not so much to sober deliberation as to intuitive insight or inspiration.

The question arises: in view of the distinctive character of this life, why is it that the earliest literature afforded such a poverty of details? John Knox probably suggests the answer when he points out that "the early Christian community was a sharing in a common memory and a common Spirit," so that "the church's self-consciousness might be analyzed into a consciousness of the Spirit and a remembering of the event."[6] But both of these elements would underscore the eschatological framework in which that self-consciousness developed. The sense of urgency and the expectation of the immanent fulfillment of the New Age would have provoked little interest in cataloging the details of church life and order.

With respect to the life of the church in the earliest period, a number of writers point out the evidences of variety which must have existed, despite the underlying unity. John Knox, in describing the New Testament as a "moving picture," writes:

> We have sometimes been led to underestimate the diversity in the early church by the very factor that has been most responsible for enabling us to see and acknowledge the existence of the diversity itself—namely, our recognition of the dynamic character of primitive Christianity.[7]

This diversity was not only in time but also in space and perhaps among different communities in the same space and time. Care should be exercised in generalizing about either a certain form or practice from evidence of its presence in one place. Thus Knox responds to Oscar Cullman's conclusion (citing Justin) that the free expression of the Spirit, as in prophesying, had disappeared in Rome by A.D. 150 by suggesting that the Roman congregation may from the beginning have been noticeably different from Corinth. Information about liturgical forms is exceedingly scanty, and much of what survives, such as that from Paul, may not have been available had not disorders arisen in Corinth. Yet there must have been great differences in this respect in other congregations. So Knox concludes:

> The modes of worship in the Christian churches—Jewish, proselyte, pagan in background, and in various mixtures—were diversified from the start, although, of course, they shared certain common and distinctive characteristics.[8]

It appears clearly established that the early church retained not only the Jewish places of worship but also the Jewish religious calendar at the outset. Schweizer suggests that the primitive church (in Jerusalem) continued its Jewish national and religious associations, including acknowledgment of the priesthood, the sacrificial system, the synagogue services and observance of the law,[9] but this is not certain. It does seem clear that the members in Jerusalem joined in the temple worship which proceeded side by side with such specifically Christian cultic acts as baptism and the Lord's Supper. Moule is certain that the Passover and other Jewish festivals must have persisted and concludes:

> . . . only when the observance of a certain calendar became bound up with views incompatible with the freedom of the Christian gospel and the Christian estimate of Christ do we find Paul protesting against it.[10]

The sources are in agreement in designating the Lord's Supper as an essential and constant element in worship, though here again the consistency with which the meal was observed is not certain. Davies identifies the "breaking of bread" with the Lord's Supper, and points to the "gladness of heart" (Acts 2) with which the meal was eaten as the expression of eschatological joy. He also emphasizes the joint eschatological-historical climate for the Lord's Supper, embracing both the recollection of the historical fact and the hope of His coming in the final consummation:

> From Paul's description, it is apparent that the cultic meal was a repetition of the Last Supper *in toto*, beginning with the breaking of the bread, then several courses, concluding with the blessing and distribution of the wine. Abuses (at Corinth and perhaps elsewhere) are amongst reasons for the eventual removal of the meal proper, thus bringing the bread and wine together as customary in later eucharistic liturgies. The meal continued as a separate observance under the title of the *agape* or love feast.[11]

The same spontaneity was apparently evident in other gatherings and activities of the community. It would appear that speaking in prophecy was not an unusual experience in gatherings; and other expressions, such as the homily and hymn-singing, must have been relatively unstructured. However, it does not seem to be safe to postulate a complete absence of regularity. While there were provisions for considerable freedom for individual contributions, there are indications (e.g., I Cor. 14:26, 33) that uncontrolled outbursts of enthusiasm were discouraged.

Schweizer—in my opinion very aptly—observes that the question of church order engages the theological problem of how the New Testament church understood itself. This is to say that the actual shaping or form of the church at any time is always evidence of the concept of its own nature, to which it testifies.[12] With this brief background regarding the self-understanding of the church and the life-style which emerged, it is now proper to attempt an evaluation of the circumstances under which order gradually developed.

Early Expressions of Order

It is clear that order, in the sense of a fixed usage, emerged only gradually and in the period presently under review did not absorb the minds and energies of the disciples. Of the church during this period Davies writes:

> The first Christians did not think of the church primarily as an organized society; to them it was the faithful remnant . . . the New Israel . . . a new creation transcending distinctions of race, class, or sex.

The location of the early church in Jerusalem, rather than its development as a Galilean sect, seems to indicate further identification with Israel. Although baptism was practiced, it doesn't appear to have separated the Christians from Israel and the synagogue in any radical way. Bultmann agrees that the earliest church in Palestine stayed within the regulations of the Jewish congregation and claims that the absence of any intention to institute regulations or officials was quite in keeping with the primitive eschatological consciousness.[13]

The Pauline picture reflects a universal ministry of all Christians, of which the mark was the universal possession of the Spirit (Romans 8:9). Bultmann supports this view in claiming that the authority in the church was primarily exercised by those endowed with gifts of the Spirit and speaks of an incipient "congregational democracy" which existed, suggesting the term "pneumatocracy" as perhaps being more illuminating.[14] However, the very force of circumstances and the reality of the church as a sociological phenomenon would inevitably have led to the need for more formal leadership. Among those circumstances may have been such practical requirements as the care of widows (Acts 6) and the realization, probably contrary to expectations, that the fellowship would have to organize itself independently of the national order in religion. The need to assure some kind of consistency among the various house-groups would appear to have called for some coordinating functions also.

That the operations prompted by the Spirit, rather than functions designated by appointment, provided such order as is indicated in the earliest New Testament literature appears to be well established. Bartlet has pointed out that the reference to order in I Corinthians 14:40 simply meant the absence of disorder due to several people exercising gifts at the same time or due to individuals failing to maintain proper self-discipline. In relation to this Williston Walker[15] makes the point that the letters to the Corinthian congregation could hardly have avoided some allusion to officers, had such existed, in view of the nature of Paul's concerns. The character of such administration may well have been very much as it is suggested by Bartlet, who discounts the presence of "order" (in the sense of a fixed usage, defined by tradition or authority) in the

New Testament but makes reference to "tradition." These, he suggests, were of the nature of precedents applying spiritual principles to concrete conditions of corporate church life and would have been passed on for the guidance of the local Christian conscience.[16] He cites the instance of Paul's ruling in I Corinthians 11:16 regarding women in the congregation as an instance of the manner in which precedents may have been suggested by persons to whom deference was yielded, these precedents then assuming the force of priority.

Thus the varied needs of ministry, of teaching and instruction, of assistance and benevolence, as well as the necessity of discipline were making form and order increasingly necessary. Although the procedures may have been grounded in common decisions, it seems that the establishing of precedents and the increasing complexity of church life required the singling out of persons to embody these decisions in actual practice. Yet the same kind of fluidity which was observed to exist in the life-style could also be found in matters of polity, and the early churches reflected the diversities of their various backgrounds, origins, and histories.

The Apostolate in the Early Church

Ministry in the primitive church clearly sprang from the inspired quality of the Christian life, which witnessed a universal distribution and use of gifts in church life. In this atmosphere of inspired spontaneity three particular ministries were identified as being indispensable to the life of the church. While caution should be exercised in making any clear-cut distinction between charismatic and "official" ministries, it appears that the ministry of the apostles, prophets, and teachers was regarded as bearing a certain primacy.

The derivation of the apostolate from Jesus himself seems to be well established. They were persons of authority who were still far from being officials. Indeed Karl Rengstorf[17] suggests that the word *office* is not appropriate at all. He goes on to identify two elements linked with the apostolate in the primitive community by certain men who had been associated with Jesus and the performance of a kind of work which characterized their ministry. The origin of the name used to describe the apostle is not clear.

The early literature of the New Testament is thought to preserve the marked eschatological nuances in the calling of the apostles. Davies sees them as "Prince-rulers" of the New Israel[18] and hence bearing the Spirit-given mission of declaring the New Creation and the end of the age. Barrett also makes this emphasis but believes the New Testament literature itself also shows the apostles in the very process of being institutionalized:

> This primitive appraisal of apostleship was early though giving way to a view which regarded them rather as administrative authorities than as eschatological figures. . . . These are the indisputable connecting links between the historical Jesus and the community of the New Age.[19]

Various views are held concerning the exact scope of the term *apostle.* It is possible that the term was used at least with two connotations: in the specific sense to refer to those who had received a direct commission to witness from the Lord and in the broader sense to refer to a messenger trusted with a commission, such as Barnabas. Knox feels that the term was sometimes used to refer to any traveling evangelist, while Bultmann believes that the term *evangelist* was reserved for missionaries as soon as the term *apostle* came to be reserved for the twelve (as in Eph. 4:11 ff.).

Prophet and Teacher in the Primitive Church

The ministry of the apostles in the church was complemented by that of the prophets and teachers, though the precise nature of their origin and authorization and how their ministry differed are questions open to speculation. It is clear that they enjoyed great respect in the fellowship and were deferred to as exercising an authoritative gift of the Spirit. The very manner of their designation in Paul's letter to Corinth testifies to the significance of their participation in the spontaneous life of the community, since they had a preeminence that is still plainly seen in the writings of the post-apostolic age.

In the eyes of Paul, ministry was a function or a grace rather than an office; it reflected an exercise by each member of his own charism. However, the touchstone of authority was whether the church was being built up and edified. While the prophet and teacher enjoyed the liberty of the Spirit, both were subject to order and testing (the Corinthian letters, also I Thess. 5:21) and exercised an authority of performance rather than of appointment.

Opinions differ regarding the context in which prophets and teachers functioned. Bultmann specifies that the call of apostles, prophets, and teachers was within the whole church and that they were not to be regarded as local officials. In this respect he says, "the activities of elders and *episcopoi* is restricted to specific congregations, while by the person and work of the apostles, prophets and teachers the Ecclesia is represented as the one Church."[20] Apparently the Acts account of the church at Antioch (Acts 13) implicates prophets and teachers in the administration but how widespread this was, or under what circumstances it might have occurred, cannot be determined.

Exactly how the work of the prophet and teacher was related is difficult to say. Barlet speculates[21] that in the primitive church there was little difference in the character of their ministry. The delivery of the teacher would have tended to be more connected than that of the prophet, arising from its reflective character, and may have been more concerned with moral and practical questions, rules of conduct, and other matters of faith and practice. Such teachings may have originally come into the church in the form of prophetic intuition before settling into more connected form.

There is no mistaking the prestige of the prophet and of prophecy. Richardson notes the prominence given prophets in the three lists where they were named with other ministries (I Cor.

12:28, Eph. 4:11, Romans 12:6-8) and assumes that if the Corinthian church was at all representative, prophets must have taken a very prominent role.[22]

Thus the ministry of the prophet and teacher accompanied the witnessing of the apostle, highly esteemed apart from any ecclesiastical rank and rooted in the primitive conviction that power in the church belonged to Christ who ruled by his Spirit. While the role of both subsequently came under question, it is certain that their influence in the primitive church was preeminent.

Regular Ministry in the Primitive Church

From the second century the church had an ordained ministry of bishops, elders, and deacons whose origins must be sought in the apostolic age, though the evidence is singularly ambiguous and fragmentary. M. H. Shepherd, Jr., writes:

> The most difficult problem in the history of the development of the Christian ministry has to do with the transition from the varied ministries of the apostolic age to the three-fold order of bishops, elders (or presbyters) and deacons . . . universally established and recognized by the time of Ignatius and Polycarp (ca. A.D. 120).[23]

To what extent does New Testament literature illuminate the process by which the more regular and formally sanctioned officers emerged? There were diversities of administrations (I Cor. 12:5), and it is apparent that special orders were developing. Although it is not clear what status was subsequently exercised by those who "have the rule" (Hebrews 13:17) some kind of order was certainly implied.

The Jerusalem church is considered by several to provide a prototype for the primitive ecclesia because of its historical precedents. The apostles seemed to exercise administrative roles, at least considering the Lucan account and allusions in Paul's letters. Elders appeared a little later (Acts 11:30) and had considerable prestige at the Council (Acts 15). Obviously the Jerusalem church was important and may have exerted a kind of "mother-church" influence. It would have been quite natural for the Palestine congregation to provide a council of elders similar to the Sanhedrin and Hellenistic congregations with a synagogue background to follow suit.

In Richardson's opinion the Jerusalem church became the model for the hierarchy of bishops, elders, and deacons, though this is assuming that there were deacons in this congregation.[24] The status of the Seven is quite obscure, and it is by no means certain that they were the first deacons or the forerunners of them. Davies suggests that they might have been the forerunners of the elders who were ultimately to form a council under James.[25] They were certainly named before the elders in Jerusalem and seem to have had a very close relationship to the Twelve. Two of them were elsewhere referred to as evangelists, so that their duties were not restricted to waiting on tables.

If the Seven are not identified as deacons, it is noteworthy that deacons appeared only in the primitive church in the Philippian letter and that when they are later mentioned in the Pastorals it is also in relation to the bishops. Herman Beyer is convinced that the term referred to an office rather than just a function. This is a considerable advance beyond the stage implied in the Corinthian letters, where apparently there were no specific officials to whom they might be addressed. Beyer evaluates the work of the deacon in terms of administration and practical service in the church (though not necessarily in *all* the churches) and believes it gradually came to be applied to a specific order of ministry arising in response to emerging needs in the church.[26]

It may be noted that Paul did not appear to know of the elders, though the Lucan account attributes this knowledge to him (Acts 20:28) and says that he and Barnabas "ordained them elders in every city." Certainly Paul seemed to entrust the same kind of ministry to bishops and deacons that the elders of Acts are charged with. Several scholars think that the identification of bishop with elder reflects a later development and that originally the order of elders on one hand and the dual form of bishops and deacons on the other existed independently. The silence on Paul's part is strange if they were as common in the churches founded by him as Acts implies, especially since the word for presbyter was a familiar one in the society in which he grew up. Von Campenhausen claims that the office was essentially a backward-looking office designed to preserve and transmit tradition and thus incompatible with Paul's concept of ministry.[27] If this were so, the Palestinian church would have developed the office of elder independently of the Pauline churches.

However, in the primitive church the term *elder* was still not clearly a designated office, and may have had reference to age or to status and dignity. Nor is the use of the term *bishop* or *overseer* and its relationship to presbyters clear. Beyer makes the notable observation, referring to Acts 20:28, that there was at this time no essential distinction between bishop and presbyter, but that the one person was an elder in status and a bishop in responsibility.[28] While others support this and identify the emergence of some elders as "overseers" (or bishops) the matter is disputed.

The available evidence points to the gradual development of formal recognition of ministries in the church. Bultmann concludes that the Christian use of these terms infers that activities which were at first voluntarily assumed by individuals on the basis of their personal authority gradually became the function of formal officials. What existed served to regulate the life of the church rather than to constitute a specific formal organization.[29]

Life-style in the Post-Apostolic Period

At the end of the Apostolic Age the first indications of organization were evident. There was a great deal more differentiation in administration and office than may have been apparent on the surface, and even when a conscious attempt had been made to impute unity, as in Acts, the differences may be discerned. A significant feature of the post-Apostolic writings is the shifting basis upon which unity was extolled. This may be expressed as a move from "unity in the Spirit" to "unity under the bishop," though this was by no means a completed movement at the end of the period under review.

The character of the life shared by the people of the church reflected a twofold tendency, elaboration and standardization. Statements of quasi-creedal nature were appearing, both in the twofold and triadic form. The intense concern with "orthodoxy" of belief was reflected in the injunctions in Titus and Timothy to propagate sound doctrine and in the emphasis upon proper teaching in such extracanonical writings as the Didache and the letters of Ignatius.

Baptism and eucharist were the twin poles of the cultic life.[30] The prescriptions for baptism appear to have been more formalized, as evidenced by the advice in the Didache (7:1-4) which specified running water, cold water rather than warm, with fasting enjoined upon both candidate and officer prior to the ceremony.

The service around the eucharist appears to have become more standarized. Again the Didache (9:1-5) provided some guidelines, at least with respect to prayers offered and the provision for exclusion of unbaptized persons. About A.D. 150 at the end of the period under review, Justin's more detailed account showed a well-developed order. The bread and wine was administered by the deacon, accompanied by readings from the apostles or prophets, a homily, prayers, the kiss of peace, and benediction. Ignatius insisted that this was to be under the supervision of the bishop: "You should regard that eucharist as valid which is celebrated either by the bishop or by someone he authorizes" (ad. Smyrnaeans 8:2).

The problem of discipline was reflected in the question of post-baptismal sin. The uncompromising judgment of Hebrews 6:4-6 was tempered by the provisions offered by later New Testament writers (I John 1:8 ff., James 5:16) and the Didache (4:14) which called for public confession, rather than the exclusion of the sinner. The basic perspective from which the ethical implications of the Christian life were drawn is indicated by Davies:

> Perhaps what is most noticeable about this ethical teaching is its tendency to legalize Christian behavior and to regulate it by a series of injunctions, thus turning conduct into obedience to a system of precepts rather than allowing it to remain a creative response to the encounter with God.[31]

All of this points to and implies some more extensive framework of supervision, discipline, and regulation than had been evident previously. The need of instructing proselytes, the growing size of the church, the settling of the worship life, together with the threat of heresy and the delayed expectation of the *parousia*, all underlay the fact that "the messianic community developed in historical continuity as an empirical church."[32]

Prophets and Teachers in the Post-Apostolic Period

It is clear that the particular presence and witness of the apostles did not survive beyond their passing, at least not in the person of other apostles designated to take their place. The ministry of the prophets and teachers did continue for a while, though it is obvious that problems were encountered; and they did not survive the second century. Apparently the problems arising from the abuses to which the "charismatic" itinerant ministries would have been subject accounted for the growing reserve toward them. The Didache recommended some simple tests for evaluating the veracity of wandering persons claiming to be prophets, as did the Johanine letters. The tests (Didache 11:3-12) indicate the kind of problems experienced.

The Didache, while suggesting tests, spoke highly of the prophets and teachers (15:1-2) in mentioning them alongside the bishops and deacons, and acknowledged their prerogatives in the worship of the church (11:7-12). Shepherd says, "Even as late as the second part of the second century, the challenge to episcopal authority represented by the new prophecy of Montanism reveals the strength of prophetic leadership in the primitive tradition of the church."[33]

The tendency toward more formal ministries may be reflected in the Pastorals, where the properly ordained officials were charged with safeguarding the doctrine and teaching the truth. Possibly the wish expressed in Acts 20:28 was being met, not through the itinerant prophets and teachers but through the regular officials. Bultmann says that the course of development was therefore twofold.[34] First, the "charismatics" became more and more officials, so that their charisma tended to be conveyed by ordination, as in the case of Timothy. Second, the proclamation of the word was transferred as a right or duty of office.

Hierarchical Structure in the Post-Apostolic Church

The literature of the period does show some clear developments. Nevertheless, the problem would be alleviated if the Pastorals and other late NT writings could be dated more accurately. The Pastorals may provide the clearest NT evidence for the developed norm of a threefold hierarchy, though they do not precisely identify their relationships nor the means of transmission. Bishops and deacons are specifically identified and their characteristics set forth in some detail. A question arises as to whether the elders and the "overseer" referred to the one office. Minear sees the reference to "*the* bishop" as hinting at the presence by then of one bishop to a community.[35] Beyer feels that the bishop was a distinct office, though the reference to a single bishop was to a type and not to the number of bishops in a given place.[36]

Other NT writings do not seem to amplify this picture materially. Ephesians, of uncertain date, cited "pastors and teachers" along with the apostles and prophets, and these may have been referring to two functions of the presbyter, but there is no elaboration. The letters ascribed to Peter (I Peter 5:1 ff.) and James do not clarify the role of the elder or his relationship to the bishop, nor is it clear in what sense John referred to himself as "the elder" (II John 1). While Peter seems to have used the term to refer to older men, it also appears to have had reference to a range of duties which were performed.

The Didache, which was most probably a document reflecting the post-apostolic period in the rural churches of Syria, exhorted the congregations to appoint bishops and deacons:

> You must, then, elect for yourselves bishops and deacons who are a credit to the Lord . . . for their ministry to you is identical with that of the prophets and teachers. You must not, therefore, despise them, for along with the prophets and teachers they enjoy a place of honor among you (15:1-2).

The development hinted at in the Didache is more explicit in I Clement, written about A.D. 96. Clement had a strongly developed hierarchical view of the ministry and stressed the need of submission to the duly elected officers. Indeed, order was not conceived in the Pauline framework, but came to be viewed as the absence of proper church-order. The reinforcing argument for order was rooted in the prototypes of the Roman army. The bishops (presbyters?) and deacons were approved with "the whole church's consent" (I Clement 44:3) though how this consent was exercised and how it related to the initiation of the appointment (which Clement links with the apostles) is not clear.

Polycarp, writing to Philippi from Smyrna in the early second century, was a bishop in a church which apparently had a three-part hierarchy; but he mentioned only presbyters and deacons in the church at Philippi. The silence of Polycarp regarding the bishop is enigmatic and probably points to the absence of such an overseer in that congregation, since it is difficult to see why no mention would have been made of one had he existed.

Of greater significance are the letters of Ignatius, to various Asian churches, which reveal an emphatic concern for the presence of outward order as a sign and guarantee of inward unity. This unity was achieved by adherence to the rule of the threefold hierarchy, bishops, elders, and deacons (ad. Philadelphians 4). The important emphasis was upon obedience:

> As, then, the Lord did nothing without the Father (either on his own or by the apostles) because he was at one with them, so you must not do anything without the bishop and presbyters (ad. Magnesians, 7:1).

Thus the bishop appeared here as the sign of unity (the Church was where the bishop was) and as the president of the collegiate of presbyters. In light of what is obviously a well-developed system, it would appear that the absence of reference to the bishop mentioned in Polycarp's letter allowed, even at this stage, for differences of structure from place to place. Ignatius did not undertake to explain how this system arose but merely stated it as an accomplished fact.

Two observations are in order after this brief attempt to summarize the evidence having to do with the development of a twofold or threefold order of ministry before proceeding to a final

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First, as Knox says, "Few, if any of the Christian documents written around the end of the first century can be understood apart from the strong movement toward consolidation which was manifesting itself in every part of the church."[37] This movement appears without exception in all the literature surveyed; a movement toward consolidation conceived in terms of unity of doctrine and acknowledgment of the properly appointed officers.

Second, it cannot be determined exactly how the threefold order developed. Apparently it was still not uniform by the early part of the second century, though it was evidently gaining ascendancy. The difficulty in deciding precisely how the terms *bishop* and *presbyter* (elders) were used still persisted in most regions. Possibly the difference in most regions is best explained by saying that the term *presbyter* connoted a function shared with others, a joint responsibility; whereas the term *bishop* suggested a personal action and responsibility, the outlook of one man upon the conduct or work of others.

In commenting upon significant trends in the post-apostolic period, Barrett writes: ". . . the ministry came to be regarded as continuous and successive in an organizational, and authoritative in an administrative sense."[38]

The second of these developments will be considered first, and with particular reference to the emergence of the episcopacy, since it was subsequently in the office of the monarchical bishop that the authority referred to became focused. Richardson says that the necessity of distinguishing a presiding officer from the presbyters had become universal by the middle of the second century and the system of "monopicopacy" predominant in the first years of the century. In his opinion it was a matter of urgent practical necessity:

> Nothing short of the setting up of one representative man, . . . who should be the visible, personal guarantee of the unity and continuity of the apostolic fellowship and doctrine, could meet the need of the Church in an age in which schismatics and heretics of every kind threatened the very continuance of the Church and the Church's Gospel.[39]

However, the concept of episcopacy which took shape in the second century was a long way from the concept of an overseer denoting an unassuming ministry characterized by service, and the process by which the gap was traversed cannot be conclusively settled. That the gap had been traversed, at least in some centers, is clear from I Clement, who invoked the principle of apostolic succession, with validation from the Old Testament, to support the primacy of the bishops in administration.

Unrest in the churches regarding the prerogatives of the episcopate is clear from the letters of Clement and Ignatius, probably also from the Didache, and perhaps even from the Pastorals. Ignatius was the first clearly to make the elders subordinate to the bishops and gave the clearest picture of their duties as combining the roles of chief priests, pastors, and rulers. Ignatius offered no theory for the necessity of the institution nor any argument from scripture, as did Clement, but merely stated it for unity's sake with the inference that it was a well-established precedent.

Shepherd[40] presents the two predominant views regarding the growth of the episcopate. On the one hand is the "classical" theory of Lightfoot, that bishops and elders were originally synonymous, with the episcopate arising by "elevation" to a higher order. On the other hand is the view that there was an original distinction, the bishops being elders appointed for liturgical, pastoral, and financial duties, with the elders holding a position of honor rather than ministerial office until such time as they became officers at the delegation of the bishops.

It appears, then, that the circumstances of the growing church, together with the desire for uniformity (or unity) provided the seedbed in which the monarchical bishop, linked by succession to the apostles, emerged—in an unbroken continuity of office (as subsequent lists were to "prove")—as the primary preserver for the Church of the apostolic faith:

> It was the tension of threatening schism and the rise of heretical teaching that brought to the fore concern for an identifiable succession of leaders who could claim authority to speak for the faith. . . . It was a reaction to the claim of Gnostic heretics to possess an esoteric teaching handed down to them in secret succession from the apostles.[41]

It is significant to note that there was a discernible and portentious change in the basic understanding of faith, again to be understood in terms of the crisis of heresy. Faith had become not so much a matter of trustful commitment as it was obedient assent to the prescribed tenets. Preserving and enjoining the faith upon all was the authoritative office of the bishop. As Bultmann says:

> Hereafter the office is regarded as constitutive of the Church. The whole church rests upon the office-bearers, whose office is held in uninterrupted succession back to the apostles. The tradition is institutionally safeguarded. . . . The Spirit is henceforth bound to the office.[42]

The question which now emerges has to do with apostolic succession. On the one hand there is the claim that the monarchical bishop became a direct and unbroken line of succession from the apostles. On the other is the belief that the emergence of the ruling bishop was a response to circumstances and that succession was then claimed to establish authority. As C. H. Turner writes:

> There could be no thought of succession, until it was clear that there would be vacant places to which to succeed. . . . As soon as circumstances had brought the Christian church face to face with an altered state of things, there was no hesitancy about the conclusion to be drawn; "succession" is in the air at once.[43]

The church, both in life and form, had moved a long way since the first Palestinian communities, and the characteristics had been established which were to have profound effects for a thousand years.

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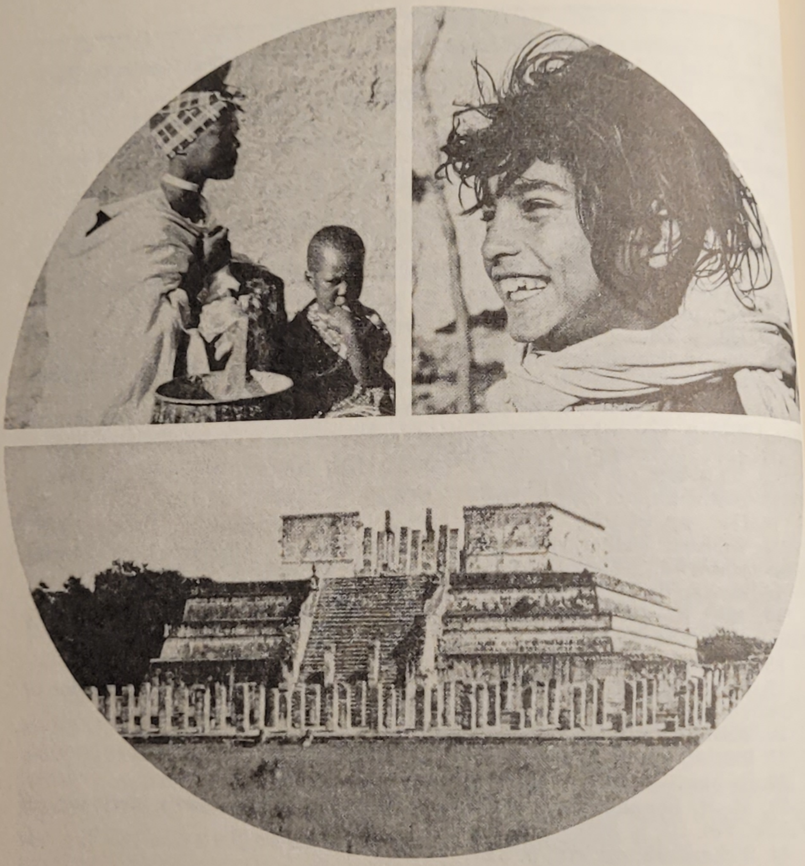

Evangelism and Indigenous Culture

Vern Elefson

God's commandments do lay down definite requirements; the lessons of history, reason, and revelation are that there can be no compromise on these matters.

The expanding mission of the church forces upon it a recognition of the problems arising from cultural differences among peoples of the world. A pivotal problem emerges in the question: To what extent should people who accept the Restoration gospel be required to change their culture? Should a man who accepts the gospel, be he Indian, African, Japanese, or North American, be expected to change his life in such a way that he is no longer a representative member within the culture of his country? And, if he should no longer be representative, to what extent should he become peculiar?

The word *culture* has many meanings. People are properly allowed some license in the use of words; but when wide variation occurs, there is a tendency toward confused communication. Further, the situation encourages inaccurate and erroneous conclusions.

To define *culture* is a complex problem. Authorities offer numerous views on the question, with no settled agreement among them. The following two definitions should, however, provide an understanding sufficiently precise to serve the needs of this discussion. Edward Tyler, the "father" of anthropology, provided this charter definition of culture: "Culture or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."[1] A more recent definition says that, ". . . the social heredity is called culture. As a general term, *culture* means the total social heredity of mankind, while as a specific term, *a culture* means a particular strain of social heredity."[2] Both definitions emphasize the comprehensive totality of the concept embodied in the word *culture*. Of particular importance to this discussion is the fact that religion in all its aspects is an integral part of culture.

It has been suggested, on occasion, that those who go to foreign countries as missionaries should not take it upon themselves to change the culture of their hearers and converts. They should restrict their efforts to creating changes in religious understanding and practice. Clearly, given the definitions of culture this recommendation is self-contradictory. Since religion is an integral part of culture, it is impossible to work changes in religion without simultaneously changing the culture. Conversely, the missionary who does not change the culture has done nothing to change religion. He has and can have no fruits as an evangelist.

Taking the broad view of religion, and of the Restoration gospel in particular, its purpose in the lives of people is to foster changes—yes, even radical ones—in the whole gamut of basic relations that exist among men. How does one behave toward his family, his neighbors, his community, his nation, and his world? What rules guide his actions and decisions with regard to them? There should be no apologies for conversion leading to changes in culture. There should be no apologies for setting out with the specific, open purpose of causing those changes. It boils down to this: every missionary, every minister, every true disciple of Christ must be committed and dedicated to the changing of culture—his own and that of others in his world.

But an important question still remains. What kind of cultural changes should missionaries seek to bring about? Christianity has erred in both directions in responding to this question. At times Christian missionaries have urged cultural changes that were unnecessary, undesirable, or even unchristian. At other times they have not insisted upon the changes that were required to preserve true Christianity among the new converts. This resulted in Christianity absorbing elements of paganism.

Early missionaries to Africa found that it was common practice for mothers to nurse their children until the child was as much as five to eight years old. The practice was shocking to the missionaries from Western Europe and America. They easily concluded that it was immoral, and they discouraged it. Experience and research have now shown that the practice was a good one for several reasons, the main one being that typical foods in Africa are low in protein. In order to get the protein that he needs, the small child would have to eat a volume of food that is simply too great for his physical capacity. The child's digestive system does not expand to give him the needed capacity until he is about eight years old. As long as a child has his mother's high protein milk as a supplement to his diet, he does quite well. If children are weaned at the age of a year or two, a high percentage of them develop the disease kwashiorkor, which is frequently fatal. If the child survives, he usually suffers physical stunting and permanent mental injury.

The well-meaning missionaries were guilty of teaching something other than Christianity. They were teaching Western culture in an environment where some aspects of Western culture had unfortunate effects (one might even say unchristian effects).

Another example concerns shifting cultivation. Throughout the tropical world, crops grow on small plots that are cleared in the forest. Seeds of various crops are scattered indiscriminately on these plots for two or three years. Then the plots are abandoned and new ones cleared somewhere. Early missionaries tried to bring order, permanence, and responsibility into this picture. They tried to persuade the natives to farm as people in Europe do. But they found that permanent cultivation resulted in extremely rapid depletion of the soil and very poor crop production. Yet today a truly successful alternative to shifting cultivation has not been found.

However, there are aspects of many cultures that, in the light of the Christian message, require change. This is true even for cultural features that appear to have no direct connection with religion. The following quotation illustrates the point:

> A curious but significant example . . . comes from the Lele tribe in the north of the Kasai district of Congo-Leopoldville. These people are underfed and badly nourished, but not for want of space nor because of soil poverty. The real reasons are: first, that the men take no interest in agriculture or animal-rearing, but only in hunting, which yields almost nothing; and secondly, that the women, who do all the agricultural work, are very conservative in their methods, and are rigidly bound by customs that restrict their activity. Amongst these are the observance by the Lele of a three-day week, with every third day being one of rest; and whether Christian or not, they rest on Sundays; and they always take a holiday after the visit of any important person. The following sequence, which occurred during a week in September at the time of planting, is perhaps exceptional, but it illustrates the possibilities:
>
> *Sunday:* (fortunate—or unfortunate?—coincidence of the Christian Sunday with the day of rest in the three-day week).
>
> *Monday:* women work in fields.
>
> *Tuesday:* day of rest to mark departure the day before of an important visitor.
>
> *Wednesday:* day of rest in the three-day week (unfortunately on this day a European agricultural expert came to inspect the progress being made with the cultivation prescribed by the government; the women willingly agreed to accompany him into the fields, carrying a token basket of seed—but they did not sow any).
>
> *Thursday:* there was too much rain for working.
>
> *Friday:* a holiday in honour of the agronomist who left the day before.
>
> *Saturday:* rest day in the three-day week; and then,
>
> *Sunday* again![3]

There is nothing wicked in the above situation. There is nothing that violates any specific commandment of the scriptures. It all rests on deeply ingrained cultural patterns. Yet Jesus, who was concerned about the daily needs of people and impatient with the foolish cultural rigidities found in the Jewish practices of his day, would be disturbed by this situation. Disciples of Christ should be equally disturbed. They should be involved in persuading people to renounce such aspects of their cultural heritage.

Many, if not all, cultures have features that are in contradiction to the doctrine, ordinances, commandments, and practices of the gospel of Christ. History provides many instances in which the messengers for Christ did not insist upon rejection of such cultural features. As a result sacraments were abused and contaminated, social and economic injustices continued unabated, sexual misbehavior was condoned, etc. These consequences tend to be permanent and cumulative. If one considers the history of God's efforts to lead people in the way of truth and righteousness, perhaps the greatest obstacle in the way of success has been the persistent tendency for men bearing the message of Christ to adjust and change it so as to accommodate the cultures they encounter.

Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, but they had absorbed some of the Egyptian culture. Among other things, they persuaded Aaron to make them a golden calf. Moses led them to the promised land and commanded them specifically and repeatedly that in taking possession of the land they should drive out *all* those who had possessed the land before them. The purpose was to eliminate that preceding culture and the chances that the Israelites would adapt their religion to it (see Deuteronomy 7:1-6). But the Israelites neglected to fully obey this counsel, and down through the centuries one of the most persistent themes of the prophets was that Israel had defiled herself by being too tolerant of the heathen cultures. The ideas and philosophies of the heathen sacrifices were absorbed into Israel's understanding of her own sacrifices. Israel lost the central idea that the sacrifices were merely symbolic of the sacrifice to be made by the Son of God. She began to see the sacrifices as being effective, in and of themselves, in placating and appeasing God. She lost sight of repentance and other spiritual changes that should have accompanied the sacrifices and came to feel that the mere performance of the act was the vital consideration.

In the first centuries of the present era, as Christianity reached out from Jerusalem into all the world, it underwent many changes, absorbing instead of replacing the cultures of the peoples that it encountered. Incidents are so well known and so readily available in history books that only a few will be mentioned here.

By the time that Christianity was accepted by the emperor Constantine, it had adapted itself very well to the worldly cultures it had encountered. The Cross is the symbol of submissive suffering brought on because of the emphasis which God and his Son place on man's right to freedom of choice in religious matters—freedom even to the point of choosing to reject and murder the Lord of creation. But the Cross was carried at the head of armies. It had become the standard that called men to bloodshed, aggression, and the general exercise of coercive force over one's fellows. The force was used to rape, to spoil, to enslave, and to convert to "Christianity." Men and nations were offered the "love of Christ"—with the sword and other terrors as alternatives to acceptance.

The sacraments, ceremonies, and other aspects of Christian living were changed to accommodate the customs (culture) of the people. Early Christians did not celebrate Christmas. It is widely recognized hat the modern celebration of Christmas is an outgrowth of old, agan, mid-winter celebrations. The commemoration of Easter was nvaded by pagan ceremonies involving fertility rites and celebration f the renewal of life brought by the springtime return of the sun. here were the adaption and adoption of many pagan gods and uperstitions. This peopled the Christian world of the Middle Ages vith a host of fairies, trolls, etc. In the Catholic countries of Ireland nd Latin America the fairies and hobgoblins still hold sway to an mazing degree. This accommodation of superstition contributed to he practice of venerating the saints and praying to them. It made ossible the introduction of indulgences which became the charms nd talismans of so-called Christianity.

Early Christians were egalitarian. They shared their worldly goods, and they looked upon all men as being of equal dignity and worth. But they went out into a world of great social and economic nequalities, and the early Christians weakened in their insistance that converts accept the egalitarian culture. At the time of the Reformation, Erasmus was on one occasion conducted through a church and told by his guide that all communicants of that church were of noble birth. People of lesser degree were not admitted. Erasmus replied, with sarcasm, that he felt very honored indeed to be allowed to worship in a church that would exclude the peasant, Jesus of Nazareth.

First the early Christians allowed the culture of social inequalities, then they adopted from pagan Greek culture the philosophy of the Stoics to justify the situation: "Cohn notes that by the third century, Christian writers had 'assimilated from the extraordinary influential philosophy of Stoicism the notion of an egalitarian State of Nature which was irrecoverably lost' (Cohn, 1947, p. 201). The irrecoverability of the ideal condition functioned as a rationale for the prevailing social inequalities that were either furthered or tolerated by the Church."[4]

King Olaf, who was primarily responsible for converting Norway to Christianity, is said to have dealt with those who held back from the new religion by forcing them to swallow live snakes. The snakes could not be regurgitated, nor did they die quickly or quietly. Such behavior was normal enough in a Viking culture. And, by this time, Christianity had adjusted to so many cultures that it had no difficulty in accepting this as a legitimate evangelistic technique. King Olaf was canonized.

Some remarks about the conversion of Scandinavia, which concluded the task in Europe, summarize the whole story:

> . . . so Christianity triumphed. Yet this new faith did not effect a rapid conquest. When the Viking period began, about 800, the whole of the North was pagan. It took 150 years to bring Denmark to Christianity, 200 for Norway and Iceland, and more than 300 years for Sweden. Why did it take so long for the well-organized Roman Church—with its powerful missionary activity and its tactical wisdom in seeking always to convert first of all the upper ranks of society—to supplant the easygoing dynasty of the Nordic gods? The answer is that the real strength of the old religion resided in such traditional elements as

> the fertility rites and practices. A change of gods at the summit of society might occur easily enough; but lower down the scale there was a natural resistance to any new religion which sought to interfere with old religious habits and observances, based on experience of life's needs and the whole of existence, dating back thousands of years. Any changes at this level of society took a long time; and *indeed the acceptance of Christianity in the North, as in the rest of Europe, only began to make real progress as and when Christianity took over old superstitions and usages and allowed them to live under a new guise* [Italics mine].[5]

We have not seen the end of this unfortunate impact of culture on true religion. One of the newer developments in theological circles is the concept and recommendation of "situation ethics" or "situation morality." In brief, it suggests that in any given situation the individual should do those things that seem right to him at that moment. If he is motivated by love, for example, he need have little doubt but that his actions are right and good. But there is a conflict here. The commandments of the scriptures are based upon and are an expression of love—the perfect, infinite love of God. They say that man shall not commit fornication or adultery. But situation morality teaches that one can, and even should, disregard all that. One should be guided by his own understanding of love; and if this puny standard permits extramarital sex relations—okay. The concept of love, as understood by many if not most people today, is a product of culture and not of true Christian insight. Thus situation ethics, which is promulgated by supposedly Christian religionists, really says, "Be guided by the culture of your world; and if it conflicts with the Christian message, give the preference to culture."

In the 1820's and 1830's, God moved to restore the true Christian message and the true Christian culture that had been lost as a result of an endless hybridization with alien cultures. What shall we do with that message and culture? Shall we start anew that process of hybridization? God forbid! And yet, the process has already started.

The Restoration gospel called men to build a Zion—a new economic order based upon Christian principles and Christian institutions. It called for a "storehouse" and the holding of "all things in common." This was new and strange to the Saints. They felt more at ease with the American economic culture of the early nineteenth century. They incorporated a good bit of the American culture into the Zionic ideal and then tried it. It didn't work.

Today it is becoming ever more common to hear church leaders say that the "all things common" aspect of Zion is obsolete and no longer acceptable. The term *Zion* is retained, but otherwise there are many changes. If one examines this adjusted plan of Zion, he finds a faithful reflection of what sociologists, psychologists, economists, and others of the secular world have concluded are desirable goals and methods for the future development of society. That is, he finds a faithful reflection of mid-twentieth-century American secular culture. As ever, the Christian message is being adapted to the culture of its converts and not vice versa.

In Tahiti, church members who commit adultery are not dealt with according to the law of Christ. We are told that the practice is so much a part of the culture of the islanders that it would be unrealistic, and perhaps unchristian, to require the people to forsake adultery. An appointee who spent several years in Tahiti has said that there is probably not one native priesthood member who does not commit adultery at least once in a year. Not only are these men not expelled from the church as required by the message of the Lord (D. and C. 42:7), they are allowed to continue to function as spiritual leaders—in good standing.

Those who wish to rationalize this situation will probably argue that it is a temporary one and that the people are told that they should learn to avoid adultery. But those people have been living under the influence of the Restoration gospel for over one hundred years, and there is no evidence of progress. Indeed the evidence shows just the opposite. The Restoration gospel was introduced to the Society Islands in the 1840's, but opposition from the Catholic church forced the missionaries to withdraw. The native Saints had no contact with the church until 1873 when C. W. Wandell and Glaud Rodger stopped on their way to Australia as missionaries for the Reorganization. They reported the following conditions as prevailing after eighteen years under native leadership: ". . . their morals are unexceptionable; and in this they are in very great contrast with the other natives generally. As an example, they disfellowship adulterous acts, and exhibit a modest behavior that would be considered perfect anywhere. The family relation is fully established."[6] The early converts in Tahiti discarded their cultural trait of sexual immorality. Those of today have been led back into that culture by the well-meaning but non-scriptural, non-Christian tolerance of the church leaders.

Concessions to anti-Christian cultures do not gradually eliminate themselves through step-by-step changes toward true Christian observance. Concessions at one point call for concessions elsewhere. The violation of Christian precepts becomes more open—more accepted as time goes by. A concession develops into a malignancy that grows and saps the vitality of true Christian experience.

And now, by the decision of the Council of Twelve and the concurrence of the First Presidency, polygamy has been brought into the church of Jesus Christ—a concession to the pagan culture of the Sora tribe in India. And the instance will not remain isolated. The polygamists of Africa deserve just as much consideration. For centuries the Arab culture has permitted polygamy. A good Arab should be allowed to bring his wives with him into the church. There is no end to where this can and will lead if vigorous efforts are not put forth to stop it.

To what extent should people who accept the Restoration gospel be required to change their culture? The answer is simple. They must change every aspect of their culture that is found to be in conflict with the Christian culture. That is to say, they must change every aspect of their culture that is in conflict with the commandments of God. He has said,

> I the Lord can not look upon sin with the least degree of allowance; nevertheless, he that *repents and does the commandments* of the Lord shall be forgiven; and he that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light he has received. . . . O inhabitants of the earth, I the Lord am willing to make these things known unto all flesh, for I am no respecter of persons. . . . What I the Lord have spoken I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away . . . and the Spirit beareth record, and the record is true, and the truth abideth for ever and ever [Italics mine].[7]

God says, "I cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance," and the man who presumes to be more wise, understanding, considerate, and compassionate than God by looking upon the sin of non-Christian culture with allowance will stand as a fool in the searching light of eternity. The man who teaches that it is not imperative to *do* the commandments of chastity, virtue, and so on teaches in contradiction to the word of God and in so doing is in the service of the Adversary.

There is a need to look with clear eyes at what the gospel message does not require and what it does require of the Christian disciple. The scriptures say nothing about how old a child should be when weaned. The scriptures give no specific instructions regarding how to cultivate land. Regarding dress they mention only the general requirements of modesty and thrift. And there are many other aspects of life where specifics are not set down. Christians should avoid getting hung up on these questions and making moral issues out of the specifics. Wisdom, the general principles of Christian virtue, and the guidance of the Spirit should determine decisions in these areas. It needs to be recognized that these guidelines will usually permit a wide latitude in the specifics of people's actions.

At the same time, the general principles of Christian behavior must be held inviolate. Further, God's commandments do lay down many definite rules and requirements. The lessons of history, reason, and revelation are that there can be no compromise on these matters.

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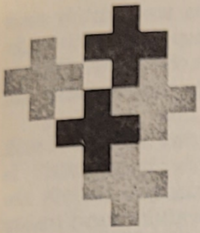

The Old, Old Path
vs.
The Primrose Path

Harold Hawley

> *"And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days."*—D. and C. 1:1d.

Many in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints today are concerned about changes that seem to be leading us away from distinctive beliefs of the Restoration. Many others recognize that changes are taking place, but they view them as desirable. Still others are unaware of the things that are driving a wedge between the first two groups.

I am sure everyone agrees that we have not yet reached the point where we can say, "All is well in Zion." We need to make progress, and this invariably involves change. Change, however, does not always produce progress. It also can produce degeneration or chaos. Change must be examined, therefore, to determine whether it is bringing about the desired results.

The first step in making an objective review and evaluation of change is to look at its effects. In this first step it is not necessary to identify the changes or to decide whether, in the final analysis, they would be good once fully implemented. The fault might be in the change itself or in the manner of its implementation or both. Even good change, if improperly implemented, can produce undesirable results. Anyone who knows what is going on in the Reorganized Church today must admit that some undesirable effects are being produced. Not everyone would agree on what is causing dissension among our people, but undeniably, it is present. Roy Cheville stated that he believes the 1970 World Conference marked the low point and that things are improving now. I wish I could believe that, but I cannot. Obviously something is wrong with the changes that are taking place, the method of their implementation, or both. Whatever it is, the process of change now being implemented should be stopped before the trouble becomes more serious.

Having reached this conclusion, the next step is to identify and evaluate the changes and the manner of their implementation to determine where the causes of the problems are. Since change is usually an evolutionary process, it is necessary to review its development.

The change (or series of changes), as I see it, is due to what I will call the liberal movement in the church. This movement is characterized by changes in which distinctive and unique beliefs are relinquished in favor of beliefs that are more popular and more generally accepted outside of the church body. The character of these changing beliefs actually has been judged by unbiased readers of the *Herald* and *Courage*. The October 18, 1970, issue of the *New York Times*, in reference to an article in *Courage* authored by Wayne Ham, carried an article entitled, "A Challenge to Some of the Hallowed Tenets of Mormonism." In his article Wayne Ham questioned the historical validity and the accuracy of the content of the *Book of Mormon*. This cannot be passed off as one man's opinion of the *Book of Mormon*. Others who were and some who are now holding positions of leadership at the World Church headquarters have expressed this and other liberal views. That they have the support of those at the very head of the church is made obvious by the fact that no action has been taken against the promotion of such views or those who promote them.

It would be interesting to know just how the movement got its start and where it will lead us. There are some indicators available that will give us insight into the beginnings and future direction the movement will take. Events which have come to light during the past year or two do not mark the beginning of the liberal movement. The seeds were planted several years ago. Going back in my own mind, I recall the first time I became concerned that something was wrong. The cause of my concern was the pro and con articles on the virgin birth of Christ printed in the February 1, 1964, issue of the *Herald*. By giving place in the *Herald* for an article which questions the validity of the virgin birth, our church leaders admitted that they do not consider it important to believe the Old Testament prophets who foretold the event and the New Testament authors who wrote of it. It seemed that, from that time on, the *Herald* became an instrument to be used for the purpose of preparing and conditioning our people to accept changing ideas in the church.

The seeds of change fell upon fertile ground, and they were nurtured, not in obscure corners of the vineyard, but at the very center. The climate was just right for these seeds of change. Because of the pace of technological change in the world and an increasing sense of frustration at man's failure to cope with growing social problems, there were (and are) many in the church who were ready to accept, as progress, almost any change from traditional beliefs and practices.

It is easy to see how the seeds sprouted and began to bear fruit. As these new vines grew, they were represented as being good. Many have seen how rapidly the vines grew, how quickly they brought about change, and how acceptable they were to cultivators of worldly vines from whence the seeds were obtained.

In examining the fruits of these new vines, we find the following:

1. Belief that the *Book of Mormon* is not of divine origin and that it cannot be accepted as a true historical account.
2. Belief that Joseph Smith, Jr., was not uniquely called of God.
3. Belief that the Restoration is neither a reestablishment of the true body of Christ nor the reinstitution of the particular structure and organization established by Christ.
4. Belief that authoritative priesthood does not exist in the Reorganization any more than it does in any other church.
5. Belief that a situation determines to what extent we must hold to the teachings of Christ, such as in the baptism of polygamists in India and Nigeria.

These, then, are some of the changes that are being instituted, and I must denounce them as an evil and divisive force within the church. The manner of their implementation must also be denounced because it is less than forthright, and this itself is a strong divisive force. The First Presidency is not openly admitting that we are departing from the basic RLDS distinctive beliefs. In fact, they would deny that we are. Instead, they sit back while those who would destroy us do their work. Much of this work has been done behind the scene in a shroud of secrecy in the Auditorium. When some of these secret works were first made known, the First Presidency washed their hands of it by saying, "We neither confirm nor deny the validity of this work." By thus remaining aloof from the actual implementation of the changes, the First Presidency can allow these things to happen and then call for unity, while denouncing the "dissenters" who uphold the teachings of Christ and speak out against the teachings of their misguided brothers. Thus, by this method of their implementation, evil changes come forth and those who rebel against the evil are branded as dissenters and troublemakers. They are castigated for not upholding their leaders and they are persecuted by the very church which they are trying to save.

It is not difficult to project into the near future and see what other fruit is ripening on the vines. Because of our involvement with polygamy, the scripture found in *Doctrine and Covenants* 147:7 is being misused to reinterpret Section 111 to make this evil fruit palatable to the church membership. This is not sufficiently effective, so the next step will be to rewrite our scriptures.

One of the next corrupt fruits ready for harvest is open communion, which follows the belief that we do not have an authoritative priesthood. This will also require some alteration of scripture (III Nephi 8:32, 40).

Another corrupt fruit will be the ordination of women to priesthood offices. The fact that God has not seen fit to call a woman in the past is no problem to those who do not believe in divine calls anyway.

Appointment to the Council of Twelve without a call through revelation is another corrupt fruit which may soon be ripening. (Did you carefully read Richard P. Howard's article in the April 1971 issue of the *Herald?*)

Still more will follow, such as acceptance of baptisms from other churches when converts do not wish to be rebaptized. (This is consistent with the belief that our priesthood have no unique authority.) Then, as we bring our beliefs in line with those of the National Council of Churches, look for us to join them. (The initial alliances between the NCC officials and some of our church officials already have been established.) Look for false prophecy. As men come to rely more and more upon their own intellect, the Spirit of God will depart from them and they will come to worship their own "wisdom" as being the still small voice of God.

No doubt many who read this will think my predictions are preposterous. I hope you are right. All I ask is that you take note of this warning and be alert to what is taking place. If you begin to discern the bad taste of these sugar-coated evil fruits, beware that you are not deceived by those who are cultivating them.

I believe that Christ's Church has the following primary functions to perform and that these functions are the only justification for its existence: (1) to preach the gospel in its fullness and to be the voice of warning unto all people, and (2) to establish a Zionic people, an ensign for all the world.

As *individuals* who have covenanted to obey the commandments of Jesus Christ, we are called to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and the prisoner. This is a call to individuals and not a commission to the church to become a social service agency or an agency to bring about change in our social institutions.

The body of Christ is called to perform those unique functions that can be accomplished only by the power of the endowment of the Holy Spirit working through it. Christ's Church should have, as its immediate objective, the spiritual preparation of its people. I recognize that we are admonished to seek all knowledge, but I feel that a majority of the church membership is spiritually starved for lack of knowledge and understanding of the Word of God as contained in the three standard books. We need to understand the teachings of Christ more perfectly and seek more diligently to implement them in our lives:

> He who forsees the approach of evil or its consequences upon his fellows, and fails to give timely warning thereof, is an unfaithful watchman, and must share, as he deserves, in the distress of his vision (Joseph Luff in "Concerning Our Whereabouts").

EDITORIALS

Authority in the Church: Two Comments

I believe in the restored priesthood. I believe that God instituted the idea of priesthood as a means of helping men to become better persons, capable of giving themselves in ministry to others. I do *not* believe that God instituted priesthood as a way of giving men a higher status than other human beings, an authoritative superiority over everyone "under" them in lower priesthood offices or in non-priesthood roles.

An honest man realizes that he has many weaknesses. It would be easy to think that only some imagined "saintly" type man (who really doesn't exist) is good enough to minister to the needs of other persons. Such thinking exists in some Protestant denominations and results in one pastor assuming an almost nonhuman holiness as he tries to meet the needs of so many people, while many men in his congregation feel inadequate, sinful, and left out from the possibility of giving ministry which (I believe) God wants them to give.

But the restoration concept of priesthood works like this: a man receives a visit from his pastor, a man he respects and recognizes as a person of worth, who says, in effect, "God loves you, his son. It has been revealed to me that he sees in you the potential to give love and encouragement to his people. He is calling you and asking you to be this kind of person for the sake of others. He will help you and be your friend and companion as you join him in this purpose." This should boost a man's sense of personal worth tremendously, I would think. Then, in addition, the congregation meets in business session and several people stand and say, "Brother Joe is a wonderful man. We support him and will accept his ministry. We believe he is capable of helping us live closer to God." Statements like this should encourage a man to feel such a sense of high personal worth under God that his abilities would multiply until he really becomes more of a person than he was before! Last of all, after the congregation has voted to look upon this man as a person of great worth, promising to uphold him and to receive the loving gestures which he promises to make, then to climax this public avowal, the rite of physical ordination should seal even further such a sense of acceptance, challenge, and courage, so that how could a man help but be a better person after so many people have assured him of their high regard for him? I believe in the kind of God who would institute just such a plan as that to enable men to become capable of giving the type ministry he desires them to give.

You probably know men who can testify of greater sensitivity, greater compassion, or the reception of gifts and powers which they did not possess prior to their awareness of God's desires in them. After ordination many men can testify of a companionship with God that they hadn't dreamed was possible as they have reached out in ministry to those in need. Even miraculous healings and restorations of souls have occurred as a result of men's callings into the priesthood. How very, very much is possible through God to *all* people, if only we accept his challenging calls to companionship with him in his work of bringing souls to him. As our companion, he first calls us and challenges us to Be. Once we believe we have something to give that is acceptable both to God and to the ones who will receive our gifts; he blesses us with abilities which were not possible to us before our confidence and faith allowed us to dare such dreams. As we give, we become. What a beautiful plan! I definitely don't want such ego-boosting rites to be discontinued. Where else, short of a person's funeral, do we publicly tell how highly we and God regard a person? Rather, I say we need *more* ways of expressing these feelings, not less.

The next question is, "What about

women? If priesthood is so great to help a man become more of a whole, godly person, shouldn't women be in the priesthood?" Frankly, I don't think so. I'm not a psychologist, and I don't know all the psychological reasons for not including women in the priesthood. I don't want to appear egotistical in saying this, but I don't think women need the priesthood. Let me hasten to say that we (I am a woman), as *all* human beings, do need to have a high sense of personal worth, a feeling that God and people do care for us and need our ministry. But I feel that giving women priesthood is not the best way to achieve this sense of worth. For one thing, it would make the priesthood seem of less value to the men. That alone is of sufficient cause to make me not want the priesthood for women. Women can have babies; women have opportunity for gaining a high sense of worth in other ways than men. I don't feel either superior or inferior to men, but I do value the fact that women are not men. I don't want to try to be one. I say, let's support the men in their God-ordained method of becoming better persons and accept what ministry they are able to give us because of the results of this doctrine. Let us as women find and encourage the development of other means of boosting our own egos, when they need boosting. Let us find our companionship with God without taking anything away from the men.

You may think that I really don't believe that *God* initiates priesthood calls. In some cases, I confess that I believe that men pervert the doctrine of priesthood and try to make it a political reward program, instead of the God-designed method of encouragement for otherwise recalcitrant persons. I, with you, know men who exert dictatorial, ungodly dominance because of their too-high regard for themselves in the priesthood. But because these perversions occur does not mean that we should do away with the priesthood. Because we tell a child we love him and he foolishly gets too high an opinion of our love for him as a result does not mean that we should not have told him of our love for him. It simply means that, *in addition*, we need to also teach him humility, love for others, and responsibility to use his personhood for the sake of others. Christ taught this same lesson after he washed the feet of his apostles: "The kings of the gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they who exercise authority upon them, are called benefactors. But it ought not be so with you; but he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he who is chief, as he who doth serve. For whether is he greater, who sitteth at meat, or he who serveth? I am not as he who sitteth at meat, but I am among you as he who serveth" (Luke 22:25-27).

In summary, I believe God was and is smart enough to know what men and women need in order to help them become whole, growing persons. I believe that priesthood can, if rightly used, help the males of the human species gain the self-concept they need to enable them to minister to other humans.

Bonnie J. Foster

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I wish to respond to the editorial by my friend, Bonnie Foster. I completely agree with her major thrust that we need to find many ways to express our support of one another and love and concern for one another. However, I disagree with her on some points.

Like her, I feel that priesthood has helped to call men to the servant role when otherwise they might have been hesitant to act the servant. For centuries women have done the servant deed in caring for the needs of children, husbands, the sick, and so on. Thus, in that respect priesthood may be an incentive for men, one which women have not traditionally needed (in theory at least) due to the nature of their "calling" in life. Men have not been called upon as women have to nurture and succor, to extend supportive love and care because of the competitive nature of Western living and working which molds males' attitudes toward themselves and their roles in relation to others and defines the masculine role as one not primarily oriented toward the servant concept.

However, Bonnie assumes that God means priesthood only for men. I disagree. God has stated repeatedly through men in the scriptures that he is no respecter of persons and that there are no males or females, bond or free in his sight. He has said that he created male *and* female in his image. I believe that. I think only men have been called to the priesthood because of our cultural heritage, not because God has not intended priesthood for women also. We come from a patriarchal tradition, one in which Jewish men prayed, "I thank God I was not born a woman." Those in positions to initiate and pass on priesthood calls have never even thought of calling a woman in the past; or if they may have, pressure from a male-oriented religious hierarchy would certainly have dissuaded them from pursuing such calls.

Fortunately, people are becoming sensitized to the kind of discrimination engendered by the patriarchal legacy of our culture. I've talked to former appointees who said they in good conscience could have called women to the priesthood because they felt the calls were as divinely initiated as that of men's priesthood calls they had put through. Since U.S. society and many other parts of the world are now moving towards giving women equal status, I think the church can also begin such a movement, which I believe God has anticipated all along. In my opinion we have ample divine support for such a move in *Doctrine and Covenants* 147:7. The principle of priesthood may still be good, but it needs revising to take advantage of favorable changes in society concerning women.

As to the argument that having women in the priesthood would make it less meaningful to men, I can certainly understand that; but I can't accept it as a good reason for not calling women. Anything which builds up one sex by putting down another sex I cannot accept as a legitimate means of movement towards becoming a more godly person. And that's exactly what we do, although for the most part unconsciously. When can women be in charge of meetings? Why, naturally—at women's meetings when only women are present or at less "important" meetings such as Sunday school worship. Who is in charge of "the more important" meetings when both sexes are present? I would venture to say that, overwhelmingly, men are. Who occupies almost all of the administrative positions in the church—even those not specifically requiring priesthood? Men. Why? Because our society has told us over and over that men occupy a higher status than women. Society and the whole pattern of our cultures say it's all right for women to accept ministry from men in public meetings of any import, but heaven forbid that men should be forced to accept ministry from women by having women in charge. A man can be an authority figure or tell women what to do but not the reverse. Sad to say, women have been relegated to women's departments (where they've still managed to do some good) partly, I suspect, to help them feel they still have a place in the church and partly, I fear, to keep them out of the so-called "man's realm."

As for the idea that priesthood is compensation for men not being able to have babies, again I disagree. Men have just as much potential for parenthood as women. The only difference is that women can bear children and men can't. Yet both are necessary for the creative process of conception. Nevertheless, to pursue the idea, what of women who choose not to or can't have babies? Shouldn't they then be eligible for priesthood as compensation? And further, if the idea of priesthood as compensation for men for not being able to have children had any merit in the past, that merit may be dimming and disappearing in a future which may call for extensive limiting of population. Then women will increasingly be encouraged to have few or no children. If that occurs, the compensation theory will have to be adjusted to fit women also.

I'm not trying to lay blame upon any particular people or sex because in my opinion where we're at today is mainly a result of a somewhat misguided and perverted past. We have become the victims of the structures which are supposed to serve us. But if I were to lay blame, it would not be entirely upon the male leaders and priesthood of our church who are in positions to perpetuate repressive structures. Part of the responsibility lies upon my sisters, who have sold themselves out. How often have women said, "I don't want priesthood and I don't think other women should either," or "I just couldn't accept that kind of ministry from another women." All right. So society has taught some women that they don't want priesthood, but that's no reason for them to deny it to women who are called and would like to serve in that way. And as for not being able to accept that kind of ministry from another woman, we do it all of the time; only we don't call it priesthood ministry. Much of the best and most inspired ministry I've received has come from women.

However, the greatest injury from such statements occurs when men seize upon them as proof that most women (and the implication is usually "normal" women or women who know their place) don't want priesthood. Thus, some women are condemned for desiring to give their considerable talents and services in ways which the church recognizes as official, that is administering sacraments, preaching and teaching, and occupying administrative positions, while at the same time men are praised and encouraged for wanting to serve in such ways.

Sometimes I almost cry at ordination services when I see men called and I look around the congregation at some of my sisters who have performed all kinds of family ministry and individual counseling, who have deep understandings of Christ's example of loving service, whose lives testify of loving service. Yet these sisters, because they are women, cannot *officially* serve in a church which would not exist except for their loving efforts.

Until we can really take God at his word and believe that he is no respecter of persons, we are merely continuing injustices. We must learn to accept ministry and give ministry without limitations as to sex or color or age. To me that is much of the heart of the Restoration, the movement toward a more godly and just society in which people are free to interact unfettered by *damaging* notions of sexual roles and social status which bind them and crush them into patterns unsuited for them individually. Unless we can learn to accept that and act upon it, all of our talk about Zion is just that—talk!

Carolyn Q. Raiser

Time to Review Church Appointment

For years church "appointees" have swapped stories, laughed, and commiserated with each other about the life they live. Many, however, have secretly wondered if things could not be changed. The concept of appointment by the church has grown to the point where it is time a careful evaluation and report were made. As society and roles have evolved, there are a number of problems now more discernible that should not be lived with any longer.

Status differences that are inconsistent with the ministerial calling and vocation are woven into the system. It is difficult to justify discriminating labels for people serving in various capacities. The so-called national ministers and executive ministers are lower class "appointees," and further down in the hierarchy are full-time employees and women, such as in the Department of Women or Department of Christian Education. It is elitism and unfair to women, specialists, and those born in other cultures to treat them differently than the majority of ministers in more traditional type assignments.

Although a little has been done, much more attention could be given to creative and critical new assignments of manpower. It appears we are locked in to certain patterns from the past. There is an obvious need for some men to be assigned to ministry more lasting and far-reaching than the missionary series. For example, some appointees could be given time to write. (Perhaps then we might have fewer irrelevent reprints of old books and more articles of substance and books of significance being printed.) Or, what can be done by way of assignment to meet the cry for pastoral ministry or to revive some men who have done the same thing for years and are virtually deadwood being carried along to retirement?

Respect for human dignity alone suggests the need for more consultation in making assignments. Any suspicions about a dramatic moment at Conference or assignments used to punish critics could be laid to rest by arranging assignments with men in advance. Appointee folklore still upholds the wisdom of never saying where you do not wish to go—you will be sent there. The heartbroken appointee family after Conference is not uncommon. Further, not only is there need for more consultation between the appointee and the church officials, but also between the latter and the district, stake, or department involved. Local areas increasingly have distinguished leaders of wisdom and insight and their advice and support should be sought in making appointee changes.

In higher education the Faculty Council has proven its value. Most professionals have a voice in the administration of affairs which directly affect their lives. Unfortunately, it seems church appointment is shaped more by some business or military model with decisions handed down from the top. Perhaps collective bargaining in the adversarial sense is not the answer, but the appointee as a professional man may need a representative group to lay on the table issues of concern and help shape the proletarian policies and conditions under which he must work.

Careful evaluation is long overdue as to who (background, education, role expectations) enters appointment, and more practically, why some leave. Probably it would be the exceptional man who given the chance would not seriously consider a vocational change. To stay with it most men have to keep alive the monastic fiction that appointment is a higher calling than other vocations. Whether we like it or not the grim fact is that the caliber of people serving as appointees will determine the future of the Church more than any other factor. (Sincerity is not enough, Charlie Brown.) For too long the Church has tinkered with the system but avoided confronting the tough questions and necessary changes a viable and dynamic future demands.

Richard B. Lancaster

Richard B. Lancaster

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The Problem of Canonization

The Latter Day Saint movement shares with its Protestant milieu the conservative notion of the restoration of the New Testament Church. Restorationism stems from the Protestant conception of *sola Scriptura*, i.e., the Bible is the only source of religious authority.

On the other hand, Latter Day Saintism has what might be called a progressive concept: the idea of continual revelation. For us this concept takes the form of having an "open canon" of Scripture. This progressive concept can be likened to the

Catholic conception of a developing tradition which stands as a second source of authority in addition to the Bible.

Ideally, in Latter Day Saintism this conservative conception of restoration and the progressive conception of "more light and truth" might operate in dynamic tension. Perhaps a useful balance is achievable with such ideology. A tension between the conservative and progressive tendencies is healthy for the church.

In our time it is difficult to hold a view that the Bible is the only source of authority, so Latter Day Saintism has rightly sought to provide a way for "new light and truth" to express itself. In the Reorganized Church a process of canonization gradually evolved which made it possible to make definite commitments of documents to the canon.

There are some very serious problems with our process of canonization, however. The article by Kathryn Olson in this issue, "A Reappraisal of Canonization in the Doctrine and Covenants," presents some of the problems which we would do well to confront.

Perhaps it might also be worth considering whether the concept of canon itself continues to be a worthwhile idea. It could be that one of our greatest stumbling blocks is our idea that the community should make a distinction for all time as to whether or not a writing should be included. Would it not be better if we had no canon at all? To elevate some writings to the canon perhaps leaves the implication that other writings need not be taken seriously. In our day, probably certain writings would be highly revered and used by the Latter Day Saint community because of their message or their source. Many of the documents presented during the life of Joseph Smith would obviously be highly regarded, just as Lutherans revere some of the treatises of Martin Luther and Calvinists the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Many people today find useful the Old Testament books such as the prophecies of Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Second Isaiah, the books of Ruth and Job, and various psalms and proverbs of the Old Testament, to name a few. Probably not too many people still find much in Esther or Ezra-Nehemiah.

In the New Testament, Paul's letters will obviously be valued by those who take seriously the reality of sin (or whatever you prefer to call it). Such persons are not likely to be impressed with the epistle of James. It is difficult to imagine a time when Christians will not find the four gospels important, although they might argue over the relative merits of each. Books like Daniel and Revelation will probably always be inspiring to people in times of persecution, but much less helpful in "good" times.

It might be argued that the writings of the Bible would not even be extant today if the conception of a canon of Scripture had not developed to help cause the Jews and Christians to preserve the documents that now make up the Hebrew and Christian Bible. While this might be acknowledged, the preservation of writings for posterity is no longer a problem.

We need to rethink the matter of canonization and evaluate the adequacy of our current procedure. But we might also consider whether it is needful to officially specify a group of writings to be once and for all time viewed as normative for the faith. To so elevate a document, no matter how recent in authorship, perhaps destines our movement to be unable to move beyond understandings that may have been timely but not timeless.

William D. Russell

A Conference Calls for Conferring

This word *conference* carries significant connotation. The prefix, *con,* implies *together.* The key syllable stems from the Latin word which means "carry." Thus when two or more persons are conferring, they are carrying together. A conference, then, is a convocation of two or more persons who get together in considering together, in concluding together, in carrying on together. Here is community of cooperative functioning.

In the beginning years our church was advised to come together in conferences. We were also counseled that all things should be done together in order, with *common consent,* with common prayer. The church was told to live together, to communicate together, so that enlightened, functional consensus would emerge. And God was to be participating in this conferring and consenting, which would emerge out of free interaction that would enable the achieving of common mind and common heart. Such a condition would not come by voting, not by propagandizing, nor by imposing. It would require more than dialoguing. (Dialogue has been described as what we do when we want to talk about a problem without solving it.) Rather, the achieving of common mind and heart would arise out of continuing creative interaction in a community of saints with consideration for each other, with searching spirit, with consociation with God. A great heritage!

Four months after the church was organized, the young, inexperienced body faced a situation that threatened to split it. Hiram Page and his friends believed that he was receiving revelations through the instrumentality of a stone. Both the nature of the revelatory experience and the personnel for bringing revelation to the church were involved. From Page's standpoint, did Joseph Smith have a monopoly? The growing church needed to handle this situation wisely, for it could put the church on the rocks.

The counsel to the church was straight to the point. Oliver Cowdery was to confer with Hiram Page. The quickest thing would have been to do what was done in some problematical times later on: put the troublemaker out of the church. To the credit of the church this was not done. Hiram Page was treated respectfully. Oliver Cowdery met him as a friend and brother. Counsel was given to the church to chart the way through common consent, through common prayer, through orderly procedure. There is no record of any committee bringing in some resolutions, of any commission formulating the standard theology on this matter. (We may as well smile at ourselves; today such action might be taken.)

Something else happened. The young church was instructed to launch out on a frontier project. Missionaries were to be sent to the American Indians out in the western country. It was expected that as the pioneers moved out on this, there would come direction about the nature and the location of "the city" that the Saints were to build. Dialoguing alone would not meet the needs. There had to be some laboratory expression in the field of the early Saints' gospel living. This was an essential part of their conferring. Some first-class conferring between Oliver Cowdery and Hiram Page and between all the Saints gathered in this conference must have occurred.

Our social patterns and procedures tend to get institutionalized and conventionalized. This happens in conferences. We need certain procedures for economy and efficiency. Such is parliamentary procedure. But this can get in the way. In some earlier times in the church such was the case. A few even thought it was clever to tie up a presiding administrator in complexities, in muddles. Sometimes classes in parliamentary procedures operated under that assumption. And in such matters as seating locations, order of business and the like, conformity takes precedence over conferring.

Often we tend to identify conferences with the holding of business meetings. The intent is to "take care of business," which can be listed and prearranged so that it is expedited with dispatch. In this sense the good director of a conference is the administrator who can get the business items on the agenda taken care of "in good time," and the participation of members of the conference can be mainly in registering approving votes. The achieving of consensus, the participating in conferring has little place in such a conference. There may be little "carrying together" in the conference and in the going out from the conference.

Our church faces important considerations with respect to the role and the operation of the general conference. The day has come when the mere holding of conferences will not do. Following are some major questions set forth in constructive spirit so that we may identify the kind of conference we are going to be planning and holding. We need to see how our conferences shall really achieve "carrying together."

1. How large can a conference be with respect to numbers of personnel if there is to be deliberation and consideration that will be person-with-person, that will be conducive to "carrying together"? This refers to the numbers in the conferring company.

2. How is the delegate personnel going to represent the inclusive membership of the church? On what basis will delegates be selected?

3. How much decision making is going to be carried on by the regularly constituted conference? Or will more and more items be decided by administrative groups such as the Joint Council and the First Presidency?

4. How are matters going to be presented to the conference, matters on which there is to be conferring?

5. Are there matters that are to be designated as "administrative" and "judicial" which do not come before the general conference? Who decides which are so?

6. Are high priests to be continued as ex officio members of the conference, or is the number of high priests becoming too large for this inclusion?

7. Are elected or sustained administrators to be regular members of the conference?

8. Will the conference be English-speaking or multi-lingual?

9. By whom will the agenda of the conference be worked out?

10. What will be the procedure in gaining the floor in the session of the conference? How shall we assure equality in this matter?

11. In what form will reports come to the conference as foundation for enlightened conception of the church in operation?

12. How will administrators and delegates converse and communicate before and during varied conference meetings so there is two-way conversation?

13. What will be the conferring method in receiving and examining documents presented to the conference by the prophet of the church?

14. How do the priesthood quorums and councils relate to the agenda and the procedures of the conference general?

15. How are objectives and realization of objectives for the ensuing biennium and longer going to get formulated for conference consideration?

16. Are there some matters of regional and of national operation that could be turned over to conferences of the regions concerned?

17. What are we going to set forth as distinctives of our Restoration cause that we are going to cultivate and express in our general conferences? What are we going to see as our mission?

18. How is God going to function in the conferring of the conference, for direction, for harmony, for effective action?

I consider that as a church we were inadequately prepared for the conference of 1970. Many, including administrators, did not sense the concerns of members and the need for morale-building conferring. Sometimes there was the attitude that we would leave problems and decisions to administrators. Often there was little inclination to search for divine direction. If so, the wanting often appeared to be concerned with validation of a viewpoint or procedure rather than with honest searching for light. There was a deluge of resolutions. I happen to be allergic to much of our "resolutioning." I felt during this conference that something might have happened that took place during the conference of the World Council of Churches in Upsala, Sweden. One morning this large sign appeared on a wall, "God is not dead. He went to sleep during the reading of Resolution No. 238." There was a fairly argumentative mood and an emphasis of differences between schools of thinking.

We are in better condition than two years ago for conferring. But we have much to do if we are going to be ready for a conferring conference. We need to put to the fore our major matters to be considered. We need to be concerned that quorums get themselves readied for problem solving and light seeking. We need to build up the conception of what a conference is to be for and how it is to proceed. We need to learn how to do some honest-to-God searching together for divine direction. And we need to get on the way in the ministries, the missions of the church that call for initiative, courage, and cooperative endeavor. We need a conferring conference!

Roy Cheville

A Call for Pluralism

We hear a persistent call for a more pluralistic approach to religious experience. This call encompasses many areas, including church structure or form, theology, religious education, and worship. In this editorial, however, I will limit my consideration to worship.

One of the persistent problems associated with any development of a pluralistic approach to forms of worship is the apparent inability or reluctance of many church members and leaders to grow in their views and understanding of what constitutes worship. If, among other things, worship can be conceived as the offering of one's life in celebration of what it really means to be human, then the forms such worship may take will need to be broadened to include much of what is being advocated by some minority groups within the church.

The reluctance of some church members to accept pluralism is perhaps well illustrated by a recent development in Lamoni. In the Lamoni congregation a group has been actively advocating pluralism in worship. The group does not intend to push for the elimination of all traditional forms of worship, as some have supposed. It is simply pushing for the development of a climate wherein alternate (not rival) forms can be accepted and regarded as legitimate.

Some time ago the group in Lamoni petitioned the Lamoni stake leadership for permission to meet in the basement of the church during the 11:00 a.m. hour on Sunday. Without identifying the specific forms involved, the group insisted that the period would be utilized for informal discussions, seminars, and other activities. The sessions would be open to all who wished to share in the experiences.

After some delay the Lamoni branch pastorate notified the group that the petition had been denied, citing the fear that such an alternative situation would be divisive and would cut into attendance at the 11:00 a.m. period. Such an attitude overlooks the realization that many divisive forces are surfacing all over the church. In fact the hierarchy's refusal to permit the innovation is, in itself, a divisive action and one that might well have a far-reaching implication in the future of the church in this area. (Please note that while the petition was originally directed to the stake leaders, the ultimate decision was passed to the pastorate.)

Later the same group appeared before the Lamoni branch pastorate to renew their request. During that meeting the purposes and objectives of the group were given. A reasonably good job was done in pointing out that the plan did not, nor could not, pose any threat to the unity of the church in Lamoni (a unity, incidently, which did not and does not exist anyway). Later, the making of the decision was passed back to the stake leadership. In a letter received from the stake president, he indicated that "the decision reached is to maintain only one *adult* worship service at the regular morning hour" (italics mine) and that two services in competition would be more divisive than unifying.

The letter also stated that the group could possibly use the facilities at another time. (Apparently Sunday afternoon would not pose a threat to the unity of the congregation.) This offer appeared to be patronizing and, in effect, reduced the members of the group to a second-class status. The purpose in requesting the facilities during the morning worship hour was designed to provide some pressure toward a recognition and acceptance of alternative forms as equally valid to the traditional activities. Automatically an option is relegated to a secondary position if it cannot be conducted during the "prime" time or the "holy" hour of 11:00 a.m. Another reason why the group wished to meet during the traditional period was to assure that the children of the group could have the advantage of the junior church program. (Apparently the children meeting separately at the 11:00 o'clock hour is not a divisive activity.)

The group sought for pluralism, not separatism. Yet the group was asked why it did not go off from the church and hold its experiment. Somehow or other such isolation would not be viewed as divisive.

The request was later submitted in the form of a resolution to a recent Lamoni congregational business meeting. During the session some discussion of the resolution ensued. However, the whole matter was disposed of through the introduction of a motion of confidence for the stake president, which passed easily. That this ploy was a violation of parliamentary rules did not seem to disturb the assembly. In effect the strategy set aside the rule which indicates that no amendment or substitute motion be entertained if it reverses or wipes out the substance of the original motion or resolution. The motion of confidence had no direct bearing on the matter in question.

An interesting element of this whole matter is the manner in which the issue was passed back and forth between the stake leaders and the branch pastorate. There appears to have been considerable buck passing and reluctance to make decisions in those areas where the discussions originated.

I feel, therefore, that one of the real issues in this matter is that of freedom of worship. The action of the church officials appears to reflect their determination that all members must conform to one traditional pattern of worship and church participation. The fact that youth groups and children often meet separately during the 11:00 a.m. hour does not appear to be inconsistent to these leaders. Only the adult meetings of this nature are construed as divisive.

The possibility that often a continuation of a church school class discussion might well achieve more beneficial results if allowed to carry over into the later period has little effect on those who presume to set themselves up as the arbitrators of what constitutes valid worship. And the possibility that alternative forms of worship might well reactivate many who have been turned off by traditional forms does not seem to be considered seriously enough.

Whether the route the group wished to take was the right one we cannot know at this point. But one thing is reasonably certain: we can never know until we enter into this or similar experimentation. Hopefully such experiments will be encouraged throughout the church in the future.

Lorne F White

An Alternate Approach to Pluralism

It is somewhat unfortunate that the pages of a church-wide journal are seen as appropriate ground upon which to introduce a local controversy. However, as similar situations are no doubt being faced by other congregations, a viewpoint other than that of the preceding editorial may be helpful.

It is doubly unfortunate that one of the most open congregations in the church has been cited here as an example of rigidity. The writer of the editorial must be aware of the unusual degree of pluralism that has actually been encouraged in the church school classes of the Lamoni congregation in recent years; he is probably not aware, however, of the pluralism which has been practiced in its worship services. The former has been simultaneous, the latter consecutive. That is, groups of various backgrounds, interests, and philosophical persuasions (including "anti-institutionalism") have met separately at the church school hour. During the morning worship, however, differing philosophies and forms of worship (some admittedly experimental) have been presented to the entire congregation, but on different Sundays. "Liberals" as well as "conservatives" have influenced the experiences and celebrations of this hour through traditional and nontraditional patterns, to the common benefit of both groups.

As the author notes, the question of whether or not to maintain a single adult worship service occupied the attention of the elected officers of the congregation for an extended period of time. These officers felt deeply their responsibility to the entire congregation to act in the best interests of all. (They would certainly not recognize themselves as a "hierarchy" who have somehow "set themselves up" in positions of authority.) Their decision had nothing to do with attendance factors, but was based instead on a deep conviction that, just as the church cannot serve the world by drawing apart from it in self-centeredness, neither can the members of the church hope to achieve a basis for community and direction by drawing into cliques of self-interest. All of us, no matter who we are or what we believe, must recognize that there is a great deal that we can learn from and share with all of our brothers in Christ. When we cut off communication with one another and stop listening to all but our own points of view, we may as well abandon all hope of spiritual growth and service to our fellowman. Only through open, sincere dialogue can we hope to influence one another and to maintain growth. This type of pluralism may be more difficult to achieve, but will in the long term be more rewarding.

In spite of the emotion-laden rhetoric of the preceding editorial and its inaccuracies, such as the repeated erroneous references to the stake presidency (they were used entirely in an advisory capacity and concurred in the decision of the pastorate), it is not my intention here to debate each of the author's points of grievance. Suffice it to say that when one examines the issue with a sense of responsibility to an entire congregation, the matter is not as black and white as it may seem at first. The terms of the petitioning group were unacceptable to the congregation. Alternatives such as the establishment of an experimental congregation were discussed, but rejected by the petitioners. Obviously, everyone cannot be satisfied in a situation such as this, but it remains for those who would exert influence in the life of any congregation to attempt to do so sacrificially and patiently, with large doses of brotherly compassion. I trust that congregational leaders will continue their attempt to meet the variety of needs which exist in Lamoni, in the hope that those who have allowed themselves to become "turned off" may yet become "turned on," and that the entire congregation may ultimately receive the benefit of the talents and abilities of all of its members.

Richard Clothier

REVIEWS

Jesus Is Dead. *By Henry Nicholson. (New York: Vantage Press, 1971, 153 pp., $4.50.)*

This is a book of major significance to every person who thinks himself or herself to be a Christian. It is, in my opinion, a most important reevaluation of Christian doctrine. Its evaluation is so thorough that it urges Christians to accept Jesus of Nazareth as a long dead religious hero and begin responding to their responsibilities for the present age.

People have always had a difficult time reconciling themselves to the fact of death. While life may at times seem difficult and its meaning illusory, still it is experienced, visible, somewhat directable, and continuing. Death is unknown, often painful and disrupting, and usually beyond control. People have found it hard to accept their own inevitable death, as well as that of family and friends, leaders, and—most of all—heroes. Great political and religious leaders are often thought to possess unnatural ability and people look to them for more than usual guidance. When these leaders die, their followers may be disappointed and feel betrayed by fate. Some will act as if death had not come to one they loved, respected, or revered. Bereavement of the widowed often lasts many years, and shrines and monuments are found around the world in nearly every culture. Such memorializing of the dead can be helpful if it emphasizes positive traits of the deceased. More often, however, it is distorted into a style of hero-worship that fixes the focus of the living upon the life-style and thought patterns of the dead.

Christianity suffers from this malady in chronic and massive proportions, according to Henry Nicholson, a Baptist minister from East St. Louis, Illinois. In a brilliantly developed, skillfully written, and carefully documented treatise, the Reverend Nicholson proposes that the Christian church is hung up on a system of hero worship of a long dead leader. By insisting that Jesus of Nazareth is presently living, the church prescribes a mythical pattern of belief and action for people who live in a very non-mythical world.

Nicholson's thesis is that Jesus was a normal human being who, through a variety of then contemporary pressures, was elevated to a supernatural status. This elevation was entirely understandable and perhaps appropriate for Jews of 2000 years ago, but it has no relevance to the world today. The church must admit, Nicholson demands, that Jesus *is dead* before it can attain a level of religious maturity that will match it to the life of modern man.

A major strength of *Jesus Is Dead* is Nicholson's excellent discussion of the background into which the man from Nazareth was born. He describes with unusual clarity—especially helpful for the layman—the concepts of messianic expectation prior to, during, and following the life of Jesus. The author also outlines and compares labels and images which were prevalent prior to Jesus and which later were applied in varying ways to Jesus. Those which he discusses are such labels as Son of God, Savior, Lord, Christ, Son of Man, and Mediator; and such images as Lamb of God, Household of God, and Body of Christ.

Nicholson describes the interrelationship of the contemporary religious and political stimuli so thoroughly that it is difficult to summarize without simplifying his thought process. Recognizing this possible pitfall, I think that the author concludes: (1) Jesus was an extraordinary religious leader; (2) he came to be seen as the expected Messiah by many followers; (3) he became a problem for both Roman and Jewish establishments and was cruelly executed; (4) his death came before he had performed the expected duties of the Messiah, that is establish a new social order; and (5) his followers then began to interpret him as immortal, resurrected, and forever living. Nicholson explains that such a conclusion by Jesus' followers was inevitable since the new order had *not* come about.

When Jesus was crucified, the Jews naturally turned to their Scriptures (the Old Testament) for understanding and began to interpret him in the context of its prophetic expectations.

Nicholson feels that such an interpretation of Jesus' nature is wholly inadequate and inappropriate for modern people. It has retarded their religious development, leaving them unprepared for the kind of life value judgments they must make. This one mythical flaw has distorted men and women's view of their own nature and of their relationship to others and has acted as a roadblock against creation of a valid system of religion. As long as people feel that their own salvation is dependent on the supposed sacrifice of a long dead religious hero, they cannot be free to seek more valid understandings of life, selfhood, and purpose.

Such distortions have allowed the church to create and perpetuate a system of hero worship and emulation that begs the issue of modern human relationships. Much of the church's resources and efforts are spent in pure and simple idol worship—adoration of a man who has been dead for 2,000 years. When the church does turn to concerns of modern social health, it does so out of what Nicholson feels to be a warped self-depreciating and dehumanizing theory of sacrifice. Because Jesus sacrificed his life, the church teaches that individuals must also sacrifice their lives and selfhood—not on a cross, but in deference to their neighbor's interests. Nicholson feels that it is not required that people abandon their own interest in order to be morally justified. Christianity's love *ethos*, Nicholson feels, goes much too far when it denies the one right we ought to have: the right to enjoy our own existence. Nicholson does not reject concern for others, but he describes it as concern, not as an overruling obligation that always takes precedent over one's own life.

Probably the most significant contribution of *Jesus Is Dead* is the author's description of what he feels to be "mature religion." Such religion must be concerned with human needs, not with mythological traditions. It must place people in the relationship of associate creatures of a single source. Nicholson feels that we need to learn to live *with* each other, not *for* each other.

In his concluding chapter, the author discusses what he defines as the "God of religious reality." He does so with both reason and faith. Religious maturity will acknowledge both the possibility of a common source of being, as well as the inability of finite persons to completely symbolize such a source, says Nicholson.

Jesus Is Dead will probably be disregarded by most Christians, for people will believe what they want to believe. The book should not be dismissed lightly as an attack from the outside, however. Henry Nicholson is an ordained Baptist pastor with a bachelor of divinity degree from Eden Theological Seminary and is a member of the faculty of the School of Theology at St. Louis University. He is a committed churchman who is asking his fellow Christians to reappraise their beliefs in the light of reality. That ought to be worth the undertaking.

Roy Muir

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Nightfall at Nauvoo. *By Samuel W. Taylor. (New York: Macmillan, 1971, 403 pp., $8.95.)*

"Fascinating and irritating," "compelling and disappointing," are antitheses to describe the case of mixed feelings that I carry away from this ambitious book. *Nightfall at Nauvoo* is a kind of journalistic novel of the type represented by such popular books as *The Confessions of Nat Turner, In Cold Blood*, and the various works of Jim Bishop and Walter Lord. Samuel Taylor is a professional author rather than a historian, and a trained journalist too, I would guess. In addition to *Nightfall at Nauvoo*, he has coauthored such disparate works as *Uranium Fever: No Talk Under a*

Million Dollars; and (with Richard Rodgers) *No Strings.* The dust jacket attests him the author of "numerous other volumes," but *Books in Print,* at least, fails to reveal them. Perhaps most significant is Mr. Taylor's career as a screenwriter, whose credits include Walt Disney's *The Absent Minded Professor.* Whatever one might think of that opus, one could scarcely doubt that *Nightfall* is magnificently conceived and prepared—even titled—for the silver screen.

Not that for Mr. Taylor to have done so excites me to antagonism. On the contrary, I have thought it probably inevitable and perhaps desirable (from a historian's viewpoint) that the saga of Nauvoo would be so dramatized one day. Certainly it might be done far less well than in Mr. Taylor's screenplay. For *historical drama* seems the appropriate genre in which to categorize the book. It is neither history nor fiction, but a kind of imaginative and graphic documentary which sympathetically brings to life a large cast including all those whose names are legion (and mythologized—Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John C. Bennett, Parley Pratt, Thomas Ford, Sidney Rigdon, Thomas Sharp, etc., as well as many less well-known figures, in vivid scenes: the inmates of Liberty jail singing, wrestling, joking to keep up their spirits, plotting, despairing, praying; John C. Bennett feigning suicide, almost too convincingly; Joseph's melodramatic break with Bennett; Emma's legendary attack upon Eliza Snow, whom she suspects of being pregnant with the prophet's child; the Fosters, Laws, and Higbees printing the *Expositor,* fearfully yet courageously, followed by the hammering on the door, the scuffle, the destruction of the press; the events in Carthage, masterfully detailed, as the climax of the book—as it was of the history of Nauvoo. Mr. Taylor weaves together a fabric of incident and episode that is gripping and convincing—almost too convincing.

Here is my dilemma in judging the book. It is true to "life," but not always true to "history." Frankly, most people couldn't care less—which concerns me.

Reading *Nightfall at Nauvoo* reminds me of the story of the juror who, after a breathtakingly dramatic trial, attested that he knew about half the testimony was true and about half was false; trouble was, he didn't know which half was which.

It appears that Mr. Taylor attacked the Nauvoo research with little or no background in Mormon history. Numerous small gaffs suggest that such was the case: "Adelphus" for Alpheus Cutler, temple master-mason; "Sapinton's Pills" for the famous quinine remedy of Dr. John Sappington. The author doubtless saw the words rendered thus, and failed to realize that they were misspelled. But the vast quantity of historical documents that he worked through initiated him into the complexities and ambiguities of Mormon history to an extent that may have been both surprising and unnerving to him. Yet he tried to ignore "history," defined as the careful, discreet sifting and piecing of the documentary residue of the past. "I have looked at Nauvoo as a writer, not as a historian," writes Taylor in a brief essay prefacing his annotated bibliography. "There is a difference," he continues.

> A writer lives by ideas, while a historican isn't allowed to have one—he can never make a statement, but must find someone who said it first. On finding a trout in the milk, I can declare "Watered!" The historian is concerned with fact. . . . The writer has to know *why.* A profound difference of method is in perspective. The historian's viewpoint is like that of a gooney-bird, which flies backwards because it doesn't care where it's going, only where it's been. He interprets events at Nauvoo in light of what subsequently happened. As a writer I couldn't look ahead any more than the people I met on the streets of Nauvoo could foresee the future. . . . I wasn't looking back at Nauvoo; I was there. . . . "Autobiography, like history is fifty percent fiction." As pertaining to history—particularly that of the Mormons—how true that is. History isn't what happened, but

what historians have decided to tell about what happened.

The history and historians to whom the author refers and which he deplores is apparently the polemical history written by Latter-day Saint apologists. He values, for example, Thomas L. Kane's address on Nauvoo to the Pennsylvania Historical Society (a poetic and romantic, rather than a narrative or factual, treatment) for the same reason that "historians reject it," namely, because it "ignores nit-picking detail to achieve a powerful statement of essential truth. And that is what I prize most." Thus does Mr. Taylor assert his own poetic license, legitimize it, and seek to protect his flank from any charge that he is not historical, that he ought to be historical, etc. The fact that he concludes a well-written and often effective book with such a bad comment about history merely shows that he is an author and not a historian, and that he knows little of historians and what they seek to do.

None of this troubles me particularly (though I confess that it would have been gratifying had Mr. Taylor made the faintest nod of recognition toward those serious, often dull historical works on Nauvoo which are *not* primarily polemical—including my own, which he lists, without comment, in his bibliography). I grant him his poetic license and bid him godspeed. But he slipped, I think inadvertently, out of his fictionalized-documentary format, and fancied himself writing history—perhaps the "true" history of Nauvoo this time. The evidence for such an allegation I can adduce in part; in part it is an impression. In his bibliography, Taylor shows a real interest in Mormon sources, and offers many insights. This is typical of the historian's work. In the text, he is given to long direct quotations (as differentiated from direct quote dialogue, apparently all fictional, which gives the book much of its dramatic quality). The direct quotation is the typical tool of historical writing and is unnerving in a fictionalized work. There are no footnotes, and sources are seldom given, except occasionally in the case of newspaper accounts. Such quotes are obviously not "made up" or the author would not have set them off in indented fine type. Where then does "fact" leave off, and "poetry" begin? For the most part, there is no way to tell. Now for the impression. Before I began *Nightfall at Nauvoo* I thought I knew a little about Nauvoo. But as I read, I began to doubt even that little. So much that I read was so new, some of it quite unexpected though not unbelievable, that I was bewildered. What new sources had the author read that I was totally ignorant of? How was he able so neatly to tie up the loose ends of Nauvoo history that have so long puzzled me and others? I was never to learn the answer. The author scorns the footnote, and has none; he dismisses in the text all the paraphernalia of historiography which is the historian's navigation system. (In fairness, his bibliography deals with a few historiographical matters, and betrays his interest in them, perhaps in part as a sop to readers like me.) Mr. Taylor will not have a more interested or sympathetic reader than I, and perhaps none more appreciative. But his case I cannot follow because he chooses not to argue it; he presents it *ipse dixit*. Mr. Taylor cannot have it both ways—fiction *and* history—and in the end he has neither. I suspect that the book is full of historical insights, but I'm not sure which they are, and which are dramatic flourishes. So I must denominate this book as what the publisher apparently intended it to be anyway—an entertaining, absorbing drama, another piece of so-called "Americana."

A footnote: *Nightfall at Nauvoo* brings life—believable life—to this episode in Mormon history. When anyone brings life to the "dead past," history teachers should applaud, and this one does. And Taylor's treatment of Nauvoo is neither irresponsible, coarse, nor foolish. For Latter Day Saints, whose apprehension of the church's past is enmeshed in mythology and polemics, the experience of reading Taylor may be a discovery. For serious students of history, *Night-*

fall's provocative and imaginative treatment of the period suggests new approaches, new lines of investigation. For example, his portrayal of John C. Bennett as a complex mixture of genius, ambition, sincerity, sexual perversity, and opportunism is a sensible one that should be further explored; likewise his presentation of William Law, albeit briefly, as a devout but conservative and sensible churchman. His suggestion, in the bibliographic essay, that there was perhaps more than one type of celestial marriage practiced (explicated in lurid detail in Bennett's *History of the Saints* [1842] and Fawn Brodie's *No Man Knows My History* [1945]) I find persuasive. Otherwise his treatment of polygamy in Nauvoo is conventional, though less salacious and sensational than Brodie.

Robert B. Flanders

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Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints. *Carefully Selected from the Revelations of God and Compiled by Joseph Smith, Junior, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams. (Kirtland, Ohio: F. G. Williams & Co., 1835, 257 + xxv pp.) Herald Heritage Reprint by Herald Publishing House, Independence, Missouri, 1971, $8.95.*

In 1970 the publishing house of the Reorganized Church published a facsimile reprint of the first edition of the *Book of Mormon.* The book being reviewed here is the second in a series of Restoration scripture reprints by Herald House.

In marked improvement over the first publication the publisher is clearly identified and a very useful three-page introduction is included, giving the reader background information on the publication of the 1835 Kirtland edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants.* Unfortunately, however, the introduction written by Richard P. Howard is unsigned and undated.

In addition, the book contains a helpful table which gives the numbers of each section of the *Doctrine and Covenants* as it appears in the various anthologies published during the lifetime of Joseph Smith and by the Utah and Reorganized churches. The table will be useful for those wanting to compare the revelations as printed in the various editions.

This publication is particularly important because of the numerous changes that Joseph Smith made in the revelations when the volume was prepared for publication in 1834-35. A comparison of the revelations as set in type for the 1833 *Book of Commandments* with the revelations as printed in this first edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* shows that there were changes made in all but sixteen of the sixty-five revelations set in type for the *Book of Commandments.* I have counted 640 changes in the 1835 edition, some of which are rather interesting.

Smith was obviously not reluctant to make alterations in his revelations. Even in the revelation purported to be the prophet's translation of a document written by John, the beloved disciple, Joseph made nine changes, one of which was a lengthy sixty-word addition.

In the 1833 *Book of Commandments* Oliver Cowdery was told that he had the "gift of working with the rod" and that "there is no other power save God, that can cause this rod of nature, to work in your hands." In the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants* the gift of working with the rod of nature was changed to the gift of Aaron, but the gift of Aaron was not explained.

Perhaps Joseph got carried away in adding to the revelation ascribed to Christ concerning the use of wine for the sacrament. In the *Book of Commandments* Jesus was reported as saying, "The hour cometh that I will drink of the fruit of the vine with you, on the earth, and with all those whom my Father have given me out of the world." Apparently Joseph felt it would be helpful to identify some of those whom Jesus will be drinking with when he comes again in glory, and he added a long section inviting Moroni, Elias, John the son of Zacharias, Elijah, Joseph, Jacob, Isaac, Abraham, Michael, Adam, and, of course, Peter, James, and John.

In Chapter 35 of the *Book of Commandments* Ezra Thayer and Northrop Sweet were told, "Upon this rock ye are built, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; and ye shall remember the church articles and covenants to keep them." Thayer was cut off from the church early in 1835; so in preparing this revelation for publication later that year, the qualifying words, "if ye continue," were added in the middle of this promise. A similar revision was made with respect to James Covill, who hearkened not to the revelation addressed to him.

In the 1835 edition a reference to "bishop and elders" was changed to "presidency and the bishop" (Section 64, 1835 ed.).

In discussing the duties of apostles, the *Book of Commandments* stated that they are to "administer the flesh and blood of Christ." Perhaps this smacked too much of Catholicism. The 1835 edition altered it to say that the bread and wine are the emblems of the flesh and blood of Christ. In the same section the 1835 edition added the idea of licensing elders, and it outlines procedures.

In my opinion the 1835 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* has special significance for the Reorganized Church. Some might argue that it is *the book* of the Reorganized Church. Few revelations that are important for the Reorganized Church are not included in this 1835 edition. The revelations after 1835 which are in the Reorganized editions are generally relatively unimportant, while much of the material in the revelations not included in the RLDS canon (but included in the Utah canon) are the very ideas that the Reorganized Church has generally rejected. I refer to such revelations as those dealing with the plurality of gods, description of good and bad angels, and even the personalities of the various persons in the Trinity, and the announcement of the Second Coming by 1890, to say nothing of the famous revelations on celestial and plural marriage.

Perhaps it would be useful to understand the Utah church as the logical continuation of Nauvoo and the Reorganized Church as a group which rejected many of the developments of the Nauvoo period and hearkened back to pre-Nauvoo days when the Restoration was what it was supposed to have been, in their opinion. Perhaps the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants* is a collection quite satisfactory for the Reorganized Church; the picture of the latter-day gospel is adequate in this edition. For our Utah cousins, however, much more "light and truth" had still not broken forth from the mouth of the prophet Joseph Smith when this collection was put together in 1835.

This facsimile reprint will be a welcome addition to the libraries of students of the Latter Day Saint movement.

William D. Russell

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The Church and Its Mission. *By Paul Booth. (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1971, 71 pp., $1.00.)*

One can easily be fooled by texts like Paul Booth's. Its semantics may lead one to think it is a sophisticated approach to religious education that lacks spirituality. Its air of impartiality, detachment, or even aloofness may lead one to conclude it is mostly sociological and lacks conviction. At first one may think it is heavily weighted toward ethics and thereby neglects theology. But in the end one realizes that while each of these statements is true to some degree, the writing is really much different from any of them, much warmer than all of them, and on the whole a rather healthy application of each of them.

Those who write or speak from the viewpoint of the Restoration have often been inclined to so emphasize areas of theological uniqueness that the basic foundation shared in common with the Christian community has been neglected. In other words, we talked about theological matters so much that ethics and morality did not seem to matter a great deal. Sometimes it has almost appeared that we have placed Joseph Smith, Jr., as the most important aspect of what our religious commitment is all about. Paul Booth does not do this. Theology in action as it applies to individuals and groups is the genius of his message, and he carries it well. He sees the purpose of people achieved as their lives are reconciled to God, freeing them to achieve their potential; the purpose of the church achieved when its full resources are effectively utilized to help individuals realize their highest possibilities; and the purposes of God achieved as individuals and the church accept a custodial trust to be exemplars and ambassadors to the world, inviting all to participate in the kingdom of God. These are not modest aspirations, but they are accepted modestly since they are seen in a process of becoming and as aspects of the Lord's own work, which will not fail. The manual is therefore deeply dedicated to a philosophy of work that may appear old-fashioned to some, but to most it will be a refreshing emphasis on that which seems to matter most. If theology could be described as how people *think* and religion as how people *act* then *The Church and Its Mission* is a deeply religious text. This is not intended to convey the idea that theology is neglected but only that it is not emphasized in an organized or formal manner. The theology of the text gives direction and meaning and spirituality to the recommended procedures and outcomes—to the dynamics of religious living.

Paul Booth's handling of stewardship is delightful. Stewardship has too often been looked upon as receiving and holding rather than building, as having to do with only things material. The author is not satisfied with this viewpoint. To him stewardship is the responsibility and opportunity to improve self and the world in both sacred and secular areas as one responds to the revelations of God. Such concepts as *development*, *growth*, *opportunity*, and *responsibility* are key facets which tie together the inheritance of the past, the present growing and maturing adaptations, and the future aspirations of those whose testimonies are daily being acted out in the communities of life.

The course of study is full of the kinds of ideas that might well result in changed actions as well as in interesting and profitable discussions. Perhaps this is one of its chief shortcomings: it may have too many ideas. Leaders are largely left to discriminate between the least and most important ideas and to identify for themselves threads lying between them. Further attention to organization, flow, and layout might help the church bear witness "through the personal integrity of its members and through the integrity of the corporate body of the church." As it stands, the text may be difficult for any but the most experienced to handle.

Another inadequacy of this text is that it has too few positive insights for application. Discovery and exposition of what ought to be are easier and precede application, but the latter is usually of greater importance. This shortcoming may be partially overcome in the process of discussion, but many of those who use the text may lack sufficient imagination to transfer well from *what* to *how* and therefore will need help if the objectives of the course are met.

A third suggestion for strengthening this course (and again it may be taken care of in the process of group discussion) is to take full advantage of those aspects of theological and religious inheritance which are unique to the Restoration. Sometimes one thinks Mr. Booth is standing on the shoulders of the reformation rather than on the higher shoulders of the Restoration. From and through the prophet Joseph Smith, Jr., we have inherited unique contributions respecting nearly every issue raised in the course. One could read the text without understanding that uniqueness.

The course of study appears to fulfill its avowed purpose of increasing both the depth and vitality of concern and action. One could hardly understand its message without being moved toward becoming a better witness of Jesus Christ and the gospel. Thoughtful readers and participants in group discussions will not easily lay aside the issues it raises.

Albert L. Payne

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The New Communes. *By Ron E. Roberts. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: 1971, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 144 pp., $1.95.)*

Ron Roberts has written a sympathetic, sensitive account of the contemporary commune movement which has sprung up across the United States in the past few years. It is not a great book, but it deserves a reading and serves best probably for the reader unfamiliar with communes and looking for a comprehensive primer.

The strongest impression left by the book is an awareness of the great variety of communal efforts, and the consequent difficulty of generalization. Roberts deals with the whole spectrum: from nearly anarchistic hip communes to highly disciplined efforts to design a way of life patterned on the behavioristic principles of psychologist B. F. Skinner; from back-to-nature rural communes in Vermont or British Columbia to militant urban communes of Weathermen and the like which serve as staging areas for guerrilla terrorism; from totally secular efforts to communities based on Christian or Eastern mysticism. The strains of diversity, so deep in American life despite our fanciful notions of the melting pot, have found substance in the new communes.

A tone of affection runs through the book—there is no doubting that Roberts respects the efforts "to get back to the land, to develop a sense of self-sufficiency, and to reject the bourgeois notion of continual, ever-increasing consumption" (page 56). He attempts no overall evaluation, but in his suggestions of the criteria by which the success of communes may be judged his sympathy is clear. The criteria are provocative:

1. The integration of fantasy (the extent to which dreams and ideals are related to the realities of everyday life).
2. The cultivation of creativity and playfulness.
3. The acceptance of one's body.
4. The development of trust within the community.

The criteria may be faulted if one thinks in societal terms. For instance, they seem not to have much to do with the problems of violent power politics so characteristic of the present stage of man's efforts to develop a truly civilized order. They say little or nothing about the technological problems of supporting the earth's burgeoning population. But the commune movement is in many ways a retreat to a private world, a renunciation of global responsibilities. For many young people, it is a way of saying, "It seems to do no good to try to change the larger world. At the least, I can try to set my own world in order." In ways, perhaps not intended, it seems to this reviewer that tragedy of the modern world is revealed again in the communal movement—the retreat to a private world at precisely the time when social responsibility is most demanded. What I understand Roberts to be saying is that the private world of the communalist may have much to recommend it in contrast to the private world to which the average American citizen has retreated, whether downtown businessman, or successful professional, or suburban housewife.

A word about what the book is not. It is descriptive, not theoretical. There is little analysis of the psychological, sociological, or historical meaning of the communal movement. There is some attention to antecedents (e.g. nineteenth century communal efforts) but no real analysis of the flow of historical events leading up to the modern communes. No analysis of the process by which contemporary institutions became so obsolete and discredited, or the sources of the massive disillusion so characteristic now of not only the young.

In many ways, communes represent a rejection of tradition, a break with the past as well as the present. They are one of the manifestations of a society thrashing about in search of what it is and what it might be, a society suffering mightily from "future shock." Roberts' book does not say much by way of trying to portray the communal movement in a historical or contemporary social setting, nor does it say much about the truly enormous problems generated by such a break from past and present. In many ways youthful communalists are attempting to make for themselves a whole new world—a new system of economics, new ways to understand the meaning of existence in religious terms, new ways of relating to each other including new structures for family relationships, and new ideological justifications for the whole venture. The question needs to be asked whether the human creature is capable of such an act of creation in a generation or two.

But these are issues for another book. Roberts' attempt here is to introduce the reader to the new communes. He does it well. That introduction led this reviewer back to ponder again the words of Harvard psychiatrist Robert Coles as he commented on today's young radicals: "They seem to want nothing less than a return to the ancient Greek idea of the *Polis*, a city whose people want not only knowledge, but knowledge of one another, the community whose citizens take and share concern with passionate responsibility. Perhaps they are mad for having that dream; and perhaps for the impossibility of its realization our lot is more hopeless than we know."

Lloyd R. Young

LETTERS

A Confession

To the Editors:

The scriptures tell us that we must not partake of the emblems of the communion unworthily lest we eat and drink condemnation unto our souls. I confess that I have taken of the sacrament unworthily for many years.

What is a confession? It is in part a statement of sin, and in part a statement of theology. But fundamentally, it is beyond both of these. It is a proclamation and an act arising as a result of the whole of my theology and in realization of sin as defined by that theology. In it I join battle in a concrete situation on a specific issue and say, "Here only can I stand without sinning in this matter. Only by making this decision can I partake worthily of the Body of Christ. I confess that all I do in opposition to this decision is sin."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the members of the Confessing Synod in Germany during World War II made such a decision when they confessed that they could not hold communion with any body, which, while claiming to be the Body of Christ, excluded and persecuted—or failed to protect from persecution—any person because of his or her racial origin. Their confession was proclaimed at Bethyl, Barmen, and Dahlem and was realized in every act by which they opposed Hitler and his German Christians.

I now confess that I cannot partake of communion with any body which, while claiming to be the Body of Christ, excludes my brothers or sisters because of their religious affiliations. The Body of Christ may allow anyone to decide for himself that because of his beliefs he cannot worthily share in its communion, but it cannot remain the Body of Christ while denying him that choice.

This confession must be founded on a broad theological base, but it must especially be rooted in my theology of the Christian church as the Body of Christ and its communion. When Christ first offered the bread and the wine to his disciples, he offered it in remembrance of *his* body and *his* blood which were sacrificed for them and, I believe, for all who would accept the love offered in that sacrifice. Christ excluded no people from his love or his call who would accept his love and give their own lives in loving service. Early Christians made the communion exclusive because they were the only Christians and because of the fear of persecution. Karl Barth points out that the earliest confession which brought one into the communion may have been only "Jesus Christ [is] Lord."

As the theology of the church grew, its traditions gave deeper and more specific values to the emblems. The bread came to represent the Body of Christ, the symbol of the concrete expression of love in the world—the incarnation of God's love, first in the physical body of Jesus Christ, and later in the ecclesiastical Body of Christ which continued the Incarnation. The bread represented the call to join in that body by keeping the commandments of Christ, i.e., to love. The Body of Christ is defined, not by belief in the divinity of the man Jesus but by faith in the principle of love which made Jesus the Christ and by the exercise of that faith through loving action. This means that I would feel free to share in communion with a man with whom I felt a sense of mutual acceptance and brotherhood in our common humanity and recognition of the ultimate value of love even if he did not necessarily look to the man Jesus as the symbol of those principles and that brotherhood. The wine was recognized in the church as a symbol of the blood of Christ which was shed for us while we were (and are) yet sinners—the free and undeserved love of God given to us eternally without condition. We may choose to accept or reject it; we cannot choose not to offer it.

When communion is close (closed), the meaning of these symbols changes. They come to represent membership in a religious organization rather than participation in the serving and sacrificing Body of Christ—acceptance into the organization rather than the gracious and unconditional love of God offered to us in our common humanity. But the organization does not wish to admit this. To be specific, although other bodies are also guilty, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints does not want to admit that its sacrament of communion cannot be a commemoration of Jesus Christ unless we offer it to all people who wish to share in that commemoration with us. To claim otherwise is to say that only we can offer the loving service represented by the bread, that only Reorganized Latter Day Saints can be part of the Body of Christ. But even more absurdly and hypocritically, we would be saying in effect, "You there, you who are not RLDS, you may come and watch us drink this wine which symbolizes the universally offered love of God, but you cannot share in the love of God without condemning yourself because you are not RLDS." It is true that we have defended our position by saying that our communion is a renewal of our specific baptismal covenant, but we have simultaneously (though more quietly) maintained that ours is the only true Christian baptism. Thus we have said, "Be baptized by our authority and then you can join the Body of Christ: only then will you be worthy to take the symbols of God's love." We have not said these things intentionally or thought them to ourselves, but our actions have spoken them loudly.

The heart of the matter is this: there is a church more basic to Christianity than the religious organization of the Reorganized Latter Day Saints; it is the Body of Christ. There is a baptism of commitment into that body deeper and more binding than submersion in water; it is the commitment of immersion in loving activity in the world. This baptism is validated by a power more authoritative and eternal than the priesthood; it is the power of love as demonstrated by Christ. But the authority of love recognizes a communion more fundamental than even Christianity itself; it is the universal brotherhood of all mankind under the love of God. We must decide on which level we wish to celebrate our communion. We must decide what our communion means to us and then either keep it closed and admit that it is an RLDS ceremony and not a Christian one, or else we must offer it freely to all who wish to take it, leaving them to decide their own worthiness.

On this foundation I now confess that I have partaken of the communion unworthily by calling it the communion of Christ but denying the universal meaning of his life and death by accepting it when it was denied to my brothers and sisters. I confess that I have eaten and drunk condemnation unto my soul by judging others to be unworthy because of their religious affiliations. I confess that I cannot again take worthily of the communion in this church *except when and where it is offered to all who desire it*. Because I cannot partake worthily, I will not partake at all as long as the communion remains closed.

This is my stand and my confession. Here I define the boundaries of my sin in terms of the communion of the Body of Christ. I call others to make their own confession and to join battle on this ground—not to make my confession but to decide for themselves what the communion means to them and to deliberately confess the boundaries of the communion of the Body of Christ and the love of God.

Bob Mesle
Lamoni, Iowa

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Succession in the Church

To the Editors:

Just a note regarding the editorial on succession in the September issue. The answer? No Presidency, as in the Church of Christ.

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I recently debated this with some Mormon missionaries. They were trying to establish the organized New Testament church and went through the various offices. I asked them to find the offices of the Presidency, and they suggested that Peter, James, and John acted in that capacity. I know others hold this belief and also the belief that James acted as president. However, I maintained that if this were true, they still acted as such within the group of apostles; and there were still only twelve men.

I went on to say that since John the Beloved still tarries on the earth and has never tasted of death in the physical body as the *Book of Mormon* and the *Doctrine and Covenants* maintain, if there were to be a Presidency, it should include only two members (in addition to John) and that also there should be only eleven apostles.

Then, too, as others have stated, if John is still tarrying and a literal church is being discussed, there can be no need for a literal restored church because one apostle is still alive.

Of course, I don't believe such a thing as the literal tarrying of John. On p. 593 of *Caesar and Christ* by Will Durant is the following about John: "He lived to so great an age that people said he would never die." If Mr. Durant were alive, I would write him for more information, as there must be a record of John's death.

I'd like to see this kind of logic presented to your people. It would give them something to think about.

Sherry D. Trabucco
Atherton, California

Vietnam

To the Editors:

In researching another project, I returned to Dayle Bethel's article, "The Church Triumphant: A Case Study of Vietnam, the Tragedy That Need Not Have Been" (Dec., 1970). I found it to be more timely at the close of 1971 than it was nearly a year ago when it appeared. I still find it to be of nearly prophetic import (in the Old Testament tradition) in that he calls people, especially those sharing his religious background, to a greater world responsibility. This same encouraging dynamism embodies his "dream that one day Latter Day Saints . . . will decide to be the church . . . that as that people we will engage in a dynamic encounter with the systems of the culture of our time."

I would only hope that in today's continual, almost casual, discussion of "the tragedy that need not have been," the impression is not conveyed that the futile, abominable drain of personal and economic resources of South East Asia and of the world is over; a "has been, need not have been" situation.

According to the original article, "What we have done to the Vietnamese has no parallel in human history." I find this attitude dangerous. It should read, "What *we are doing* to the Vietnamese has no parallel." I see the indignation of the American public toward these atrocities turning into apathy. Since the automated air war (1984) has superseded the unpopular ground war, America's Christian concern, or troubled conscience, has been eased. A case of treating the symptoms instead of the disease.

Hopefully, the "people of God," called for by Mr. Bethel will one day be as concerned for the lives of Vietnamese, civilian and military alike, as they would be for the safety and welfare of a "good American boy"—a son, brother, or the proverbial apple-pie-eating boy next door. Today this is not the case. The decrease in American deaths has been paralleled by a decrease in American concern. According to the *American Reports* vital statistics put out by the clergy and laymen against the war: "The monthly casualty lists in Indo-China have risen from approximately 95,000 [people, not statistics, but people!] under Johnson to 130,000 [more people] under Nixon."

Mr. Bethel asks, "Have you really understood what we have done to this little country?" Yet conscience pangs are not enough. We must understand and help others to understand what we are doing and what we are not doing to and for the human race physically as well as to the human spirit around the globe. The current attitude of "winding down the war" conveniently overlooks the air war. We must reevaluate what we are doing to these nations and their culture. In only two-and-one-half years of office the Nixon Administration has dropped over 2,700,000 tons of bombs on Indo-China, more than were dropped in all of World War II and Korea combined. As the ground war subsides, the air war rages.

Can American Christians ever learn to love without nationalistic or racist reserve? Can we learn to value the life and welfare of non-white, non-Western, and non-Christian *human beings?* According to the Kennedy subcommittee on world refugees, April 3, 1971, "In this year, 1971, more civilians are being killed and wounded in the three countries of Indo-China, and more made refugees than at any other time in history. Most of the casualties are caused, and people made refugees, by American and allied military activity." Statistics are not impressive—human life is impressive—not to be taken—lightly.

Surely the church represented by the lion and the lamb will learn to value all human life—to value peace. We must strive to find a way to make Christian ideas, humanistic ideas, work in our own lives and in our national life as well. If we are going to try to instill attitudes which we attribute to the early movement (Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ) into today's world, it would be well to look at the nearly total pacifism of the first century church and—Stop Killing Commies for Christ!

Bradford Barwise
Independence, Mo.

Clarification

To the Editors:

My letter in the September issue of *Courage* was more of a review of the book, *What Does the Book of Mormon Teach?* by Gordon Frazer (Moody Press) rather than my personal conviction that the *Book of Mormon* is a second witness to the convincing of Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ.

The march of mind and honest investigation has, and will continue to prove, that Mediterranean people could have made it in primitive ships.

Nevertheless, we need to face our Christian critics who also believe the gospel and the second witness of the New Testament to Old Testament truth, which is confirmed again in the *Book of Mormon.*

John Luff Williams
Ottumwa, Iowa

On Means and Ends

To the Editors:

Your "courage" in insisting upon "scholarly" expression slipped in your September 1971 issue when you included Howard Ligget's article "On Means and Ends: Landon Has It Backwards." Independent thought it most certainly is—but scholarly? I had a brief lapse of memory while I was reading it and thought I had somehow gotten hold of a copy of *The Plain Truth.* Now you don't want to foster that kind of confusion in the minds of your readers, do you? Be honest with us! You included the article just to get a response from your readers, didn't you?

Dick Hahn
Independence, Missouri

Obedience and Action

To the Editors:

When we are taught by the precepts of men, by the wisdom of our wise men, we perish; and the marvelous work and wonder is not performed in our midst (Isaiah 29:14).

Let us start with the basic principle that Yahweh (God) is unchangeable. “Behold, I am God, and give heed unto my word, which is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 6:1). Without acknowledging this we turn things upside down and live by tradition, habit, and prejudice, which makes His Word of no effect (Matthew 15:1-8). Unless we abide in His Word, our work is fruitless. He demands obedience.

One hundred and forty years after the gospel was restored (as we think) we blithely sing, “We limit not the truth of God to our poor reach of mind by notions of our day and sect, crude, partial, and confined” (*The Hymnal,* No. 292). Which part is crude and partial?

Facts change daily but truth never. The Master-Teacher and head of His church said, “Thy word is truth” (St. John 17:17). If we spoke in court and conversation as if every word said must fully agree with His Word, would we not talk less and have more action filled with love and obedience?

Our message is the gospel of the Kingdom. We have prayed for two thousand years, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” There are seven sure goals for our individual lives and all the earth, seven aspects of the Kingdom:

1. Education. “All thy children shall be taught of [Yahweh]; and great shall be the peace of thy children” (Third Nephi 10:21). “Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do” (Second Nephi 14:4). Haven’t we mostly bypassed them?

2. Health. The Word of Wisdom demands obedience, natural foods without additives and preservatives and mild herbs and faith. The Sanitarium denies this, guided by the precepts of men.

3. Security. This goal is one of independence from the world with every family not working for the world but for its own businesses and farms, with everyone sharing his knowledge.

4. Protection of land and wildlife. We must use God’s promises in the scriptures in daily employment and guidance.

5. He will return to us a pure language. Hebrew is the language of our Master and the Bible. We should know it.

6. They shall learn war no more. We will beat the instruments of war into plowshares and constructive efforts.

7. All shall know Yahweh, the source of wisdom and life; and the least and the greatest shall love Him with all their beings and their neighbors as themselves.

With these as our goals, can’t we see where our knowledge has been crude, partial, and confined? Let’s be practical and diagnose it all without so much verbiage. We need less talk and more doing of His will!

Are our education, health, ecology, independence, and discussions, our love and guidance by His Holy Spirit higher than that of other churches and cities? If not, how do we change it now? Are we effectively sharing our time, talents, energies, and money with each other and the world? Do we segregate age and youth and fail to make the wisdom and experience of a long life rewarding to all?

These are vital questions to ask in reassessing our present action in the light of Kingdom goals. The marvelous work and wonder exists so that the light of love, joy, and purpose will shine in love of our neighbor, expressed through visiting and sharing this good news in practical action.

Mrs. Mona Davis
Independence, Missouri

On Courage

To the Editors:

This is the one letter I suppose I will finish and mail. I receive *Courage* regularly, and the *Herald*, and various and sundry communications from my father, and occasionally recall my youth in the church. But frankly none of it occupies more than a fraction of my conscious attention. I went to church a couple of weeks ago in Manhattan; that was my first RLDS service in almost two years.

I think most of your contributors (and regardless of the statements to the contrary there is a clear and undeniable bias in the magazine) need to face up to a few very real and extremely important facts. One is that the people of the church, by and large, do not base either their faith or their action on logic, reason, intellect, or whatever dialectical thing. If there is to be a church, it *must* recognize that most of us are only moderately intelligent and nominally well-educated. No amount of "persuasion," however reasonable, will take the place of subjective, irrational, unblinking faith. The True Believer.

I would not for a moment deny you or any of your colleagues your right to or just deserving of the reputation of intellectual, or opinion leader, or whatever you wish to call yourselves. But, like the Senator Goodells, you will *never* have the support of the people for *any* cause except through inculcating the faith of the True Believer.

I regard myself, along with most of you, as an autonomous man—the references to Hoffer are remarkably apt—and thus an unhappy one. But I have adopted an orthodox, liturgical Christian faith, one which frees me for a life of action to my own benefit and that of my family. Admit it or not, the strongest motivation among *the people* is precisely that. And Christ, of all people, said "feed my sheep." So the best service that can be rendered to the church is one of affirmation, without hedging and without qualifications (logic be damned).

If we must all live with the nagging knowledge that our faith doesn't conform to an Aristotelian system or a Cartesian one or whatever, then please spare others the discomfort. Most of them can't handle it.

David Draper Davisville, New York

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We apologize for the fact that every regular issue of *Courage* has been mailed at least one month later than the publication date. It is very difficult to keep up with deadlines when all management and editorial labor is done on a volunteer basis by people who are already busy.

Since we find it difficult to mail on any precise date, we have decided that it would be better to give *Courage* seasonal dates. Hence this issue, which would have been the December issue by our old dating system, is being called the Winter issue. We will continue to publish four times a year, but the dates will be Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall.

We appreciate your patience.

Editorial Committee

CONTENTS

Articles

A Reappraisal of Canonization in the Doctrine and Covenants — *Kathryn Olson* — 345
The Spirit and the Forms — *Geoffrey Spencer* — 353
Evangelism and Indigenous Culture — *Vern Elefson* — 369
The Old, Old Path vs. The Primrose Path — *Harold Hawley* — 377

Editorials

Authority in the Church: Two Comments — *Bonnie Foster* — 381
Carolyn Raiser — 382
Time to Review Church Appointment — *Richard Lancaster* — 384
The Problem of Canonization — *William D. Russell* — 385
A Conference Calls for Conferring — *Roy Cheville* — 387
A Call for Pluralism — *Lorne F. White* — 389
An Alternate Approach to Pluralism — *Richard Clothier* — 391

Reviews

Nicholson, *Jesus is Dead* — *Roy Muir* — 392
Taylor, *Nightfall at Nauvoo* — *Robert Flanders* — 393
Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants 1835* — *William Russell* — 396
Booth, *The Church and Its Mission* — *Albert L. Payne* — 397
Roberts, *The New Communes* — *Lloyd Young* — 399
Letters — 401